

NEW 80th ANNIVERSARY YEAR 1913-1993

STATESMAN

DECEMBER 1993 £1.65 Inc 10% libel tax & SOCIETY

Mat Coward on rich bastards
Sarah Baxter on the budget
John Cole on Ireland
Zhores Medvedev and Boris
Kagarlitsky on Russia
Auberon Waugh's influences

The church has been
strangely silent about
the difference between
right and wrong

HOME OFFICE
MINISTER DAVID
MACLEAN YESTERDAY

FREAKS OF NATURE

CHILD'S PLAY
Screen sadism is immoral whether or not it causes crime

MOTHER WHO STILL WON'T BELIEVE HER BOY IS A KILLER

'He's a little liar, he's devious,
he's a scallie, he robs, he plays
truant, but he's not a murderer'

DESCENT
INTO EVIL

al boys but they had hearts of
killing James gave a buzz

was so
evil they
called

THE BISHOPS COULD HAPPEN?

Beyond goodness
and evil Church 'strangely
silent' on morality

vernment and Church clash over
the teaching of right and wrong

DID VIDEO NASTY TRIGGER KILLING? SEE PAGES 2 AND 3
Boys 'knew right
from wrong'

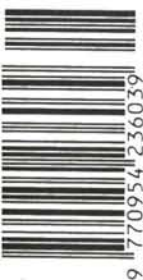
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Moral panic

Yvonne Roberts: teaching children to be bad



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Scaling new heights: Nuclear Electric announces operating profit up 95%.

Nuclear Electric's six months to 30th September 1993.*

Energy production up 20% to 29.2TWh.

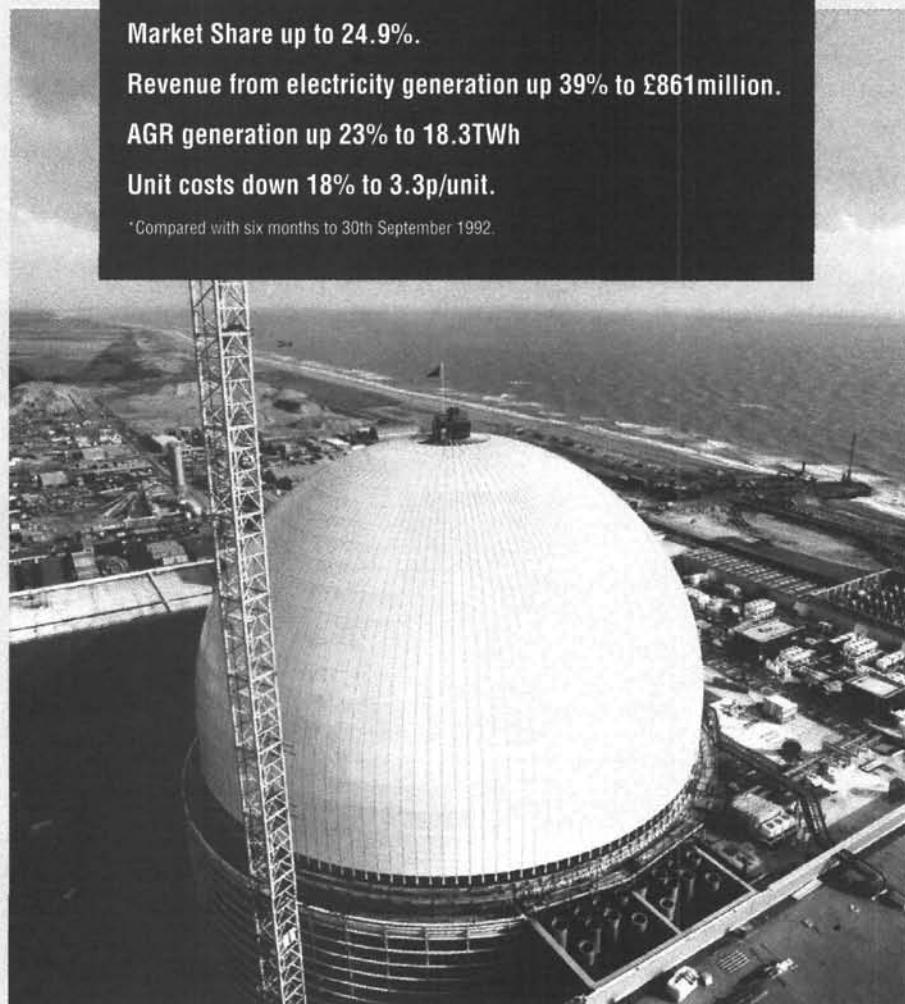
Market Share up to 24.9%.

Revenue from electricity generation up 39% to £861million.

AGR generation up 23% to 18.3TWh

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* Compared with six months to 30th September 1992.



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CLEAN ENERGY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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Fiction

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PrintOut

Trashing modern life

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John Smith,

Assistant Commissioner of the
Metropolitan Police

Judy McKnight, NAPO

Vivien Stern, NACRO

Andrew Coyle, Governor of Brixton Prison

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Please reserve residential place(s) for Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th January. **£70** members or **£80** non-members. The price includes accommodation (one night) and all meals. Accommodation can be provided on the Friday night for an additional **£30** cost. (First session starts at 10.30am on the Saturday.)

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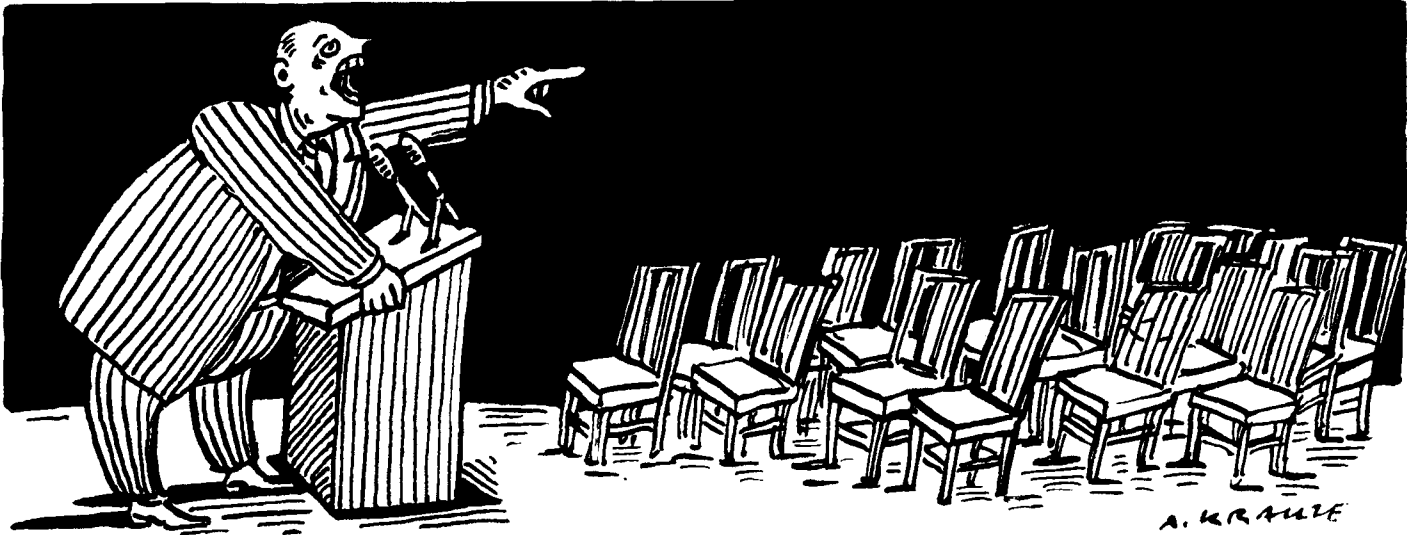
(It's the one on the left).

Postal Services and the rural communities they serve are under threat. The Government is reviewing the work of the Post Office and looking at areas that might be ripe for privatisation. Obviously, these areas are likely to be the most profitable parts of the service. Nobody will make a profit in rural areas where a postman may travel 10 miles to deliver a letter: nobody will make a profit from the network of Post Offices that are social centres in many villages, as

well as a place to buy stamps or collect pensions: nobody will make a profit on the Postbus that is for many people their only means of transport. Break it up, take away the most profitable parts and the service, particularly in rural areas, will soon start to collapse. 91.5% of first class letters arrive the next day and the British Post Office is regarded as the best in the world. Let's keep it that way.

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The great political turn-off

Elections apart, the budget is *the* great event in the British political calendar. Once a year (twice this year), virtually everyone in the country has an interest in the political process—albeit often only at the fairly prosaic level of what effect the Chancellor's announcements will have on the pounds in their pay packets or the price of petrol at the pumps. For an evening at least, the talk in the pubs turns to the government's tax (and now spending) policies.

It is not usually so. This year's *International Social Attitudes: the 10th BSA report* (Dartmouth, £14.95 paperback), published on Thursday, shows the extent to which a "disengagement from democracy" is taking place worldwide. Of 11 countries covered in surveys of people's interest in politics, only Australia, with 52 per cent, produced a majority of voters who said they were "very" or "fairly" interested. In Britain, the comparable figure was only 41 per cent; 34 per cent said they were "not very" or "not at all" interested.

In Northern Ireland, where one might think that politics would have a greater urgency in people's lives than elsewhere in the UK, the figure for those showing little or no interest in the process by which they are governed rose to 50 per cent. In the Irish Republic it was 38 per cent; 34 per cent in Israel; 43 per cent in Hungary; and 51 per cent in Italy.

Commenting on the figures in *International Social Attitudes*, Professor Michael Johnston says that, had the highest levels of political disengagement been found in relatively stable, prosperous democracies such as western Germany or Australia, they might have been interpreted as signs of complacency, or as indications that politics is simply too commonplace in mass-media cultures to engage interest or excitement. But the fact that interest is lowest in precisely those countries that have been most troubled, or where politics might be thought to be most exciting, is "more ominous. It suggests that in these countries, where the political process ought

to be offering opportunities to change things, it may instead be seen by many people as failing them and as a distant or even futile process."

The survey findings add weight to perceptions of a pending crisis of the entire democratic political process. It is not simply that disillusionment is setting in with the established political parties and institutions—hence the rise of far-right parties Europe-wide, the near wipe-out of the Conservative Party in the Canadian elections or the recent political upheavals in Italy or Japan, to cite but a few examples. The sense of disillusionment extends to people's belief in the prospects of creating new political organisations and institutions. It reflects a growing disbelief in the ability to *change* anything through traditional political activity.

This ties into J K Galbraith's thesis of the "culture of contentment". Ironically, according to the *International Social Attitudes* findings, it is the very people who are least dissatisfied with the status quo who are most interested in politics, and, therefore, (among other things) most likely to vote. A self-reinforcing cycle is thus set in motion, whereby those who are most likely to be elected are least likely to make the sorts of changes in the political system that would lead to more people being interested in politics.

A detailed examination of the survey findings gives some clues as to what those changes might need to be. Those who are most disengaged from the political process are the poor, the young, ethnic minorities—and women. In Britain, 40 per cent of women, compared with 25 per cent of men, say they have little or no interest in politics. In Northern Ireland the split is 55:45. It is 28:14 in West Germany; 39:28 in Israel; 52:32 in Hungary; and 61:40 in Italy. The established parties, dominated by men, the comfortably-off, ethnic majorities and the middle-aged or old ignore the message that such disparities of disenchantment reveal at their peril.

Some of the "new" thinkers around issues to do with the reconstitution of the political process have tended to see the discomfiture of the established parties and political institutions almost as cause for celebration. People may be disengaging from the old politics, but they are participating in ever greater numbers in the new—environmental bodies, cultural activities and organisations, pressure groups. They are interested and active in other ways.

But this seems not to be the evidence of surveys worldwide. Those who are most disengaged from traditional politics are also most disengaged from any sense of civic responsibility, of identity of themselves as citizens, or of commitment to the notion of democracy itself. They may not necessarily be apathetic, says Michael Johnston, but they are certainly less likely to express themselves through available political channels. And they are also a lot less tolerant of the rights of minorities to exercise dissent—"almost as if they do not approve of *anyone* holding stronger views than theirs".

One of the most alarming survey findings in *International Social Attitudes* is the response of those who express little interest in politics to the question as to whether they would "definitely allow" people to take part in three forms of protest activity—meetings, publications or demonstrations—"against a government action they strongly oppose". In virtually every country only a minority said they would allow such activities to take place. Contrary to what might be expected, given that the politically interested are also likely to be among those with the strongest views, it is true in all countries—and by a considerable margin—that they are, nonetheless, the most supportive of the right of others to disagree publicly and to protest actively against government actions and policies.

Herein lie the attitudinal roots of a potential new authoritarianism. The old political order may be dying; but what is struggling to be born may not be a new, more modern democracy.

Pollwatch

Fewer than one in five British voters want Northern Ireland to remain a part of the United Kingdom. That is the backdrop to the contact between the government and the IRA, exposed this week. The findings came in a *Guardian*/ICM poll on 10 November, which also revealed that 59 per cent of the British public believed Sinn Fein or the IRA should participate in talks (15 per cent unconditionally, 44 per cent in the event that they renounced violence).

The greatest number (25 per cent) admitted they did not know what was in Northern Ireland's best "long-term" interests; 23 per cent said it should become a separate state; 18 per cent that it should remain part of the UK; 17 per cent that it should reunify with Ireland; and 16 per cent that it should come under joint sovereignty.

For the first time, a majority of people in Ireland (51 per cent) are willing to change the Irish constitution to reflect merely an "aspiration" rather than a territorial claim to Irish unity, according to a poll for the *Irish Times* on 27 November. A massive 92 per cent of Irish voters said they wanted Sinn Fein to be included in talks.

The government's family values campaign is making little headway. An NOP poll for the *Independent* on 29 November shows that

Organisation	Date	Sample	Con%	Lab%	Lib Dem%	Other
Gallup/Daily Telegraph	5 Nov	1,084	24 (23)	46.5 (44.5)	25.5 (27)	4 (5.5)
Gallup 9000/Daily Telegraph	5 Nov	10,884	26.2 (24.3)	45.6 (45)	22.6 (24.7)	5.5 (6)
ICM/Guardian	11 Nov	1,400	29 (31)	45 (46)	23 (19)	3 (4)
Mori/Times	26 Nov	1,772	29 (29)	47 (45)	22 (23)	n/a

The previous month's figures are given in brackets.

people have not only grown markedly more tolerant towards pre- and extra-marital sex, homosexuality and lone parenthood in the past ten years of Conservative government, but also more sympathetic to people on welfare since the last recession has struck.

A majority of respondents (51 per cent) did not believe that sex before marriage was "all wrong" and support for having children outside wedlock has doubled from 17 to 35 per cent in the past four years. Fifty-five per cent agreed that "the government should spend more money on the very poor, even if that led to higher taxes", with 22 per cent against.

One of the most striking findings is that more than half of all women (55 per cent) believe that a single mother can bring up her child as well as a married couple. For men and women, the figure is 48 per cent, up 18 points since 1989. The *Independent* interprets these results as a sign of growing irritation with the government's moral message.

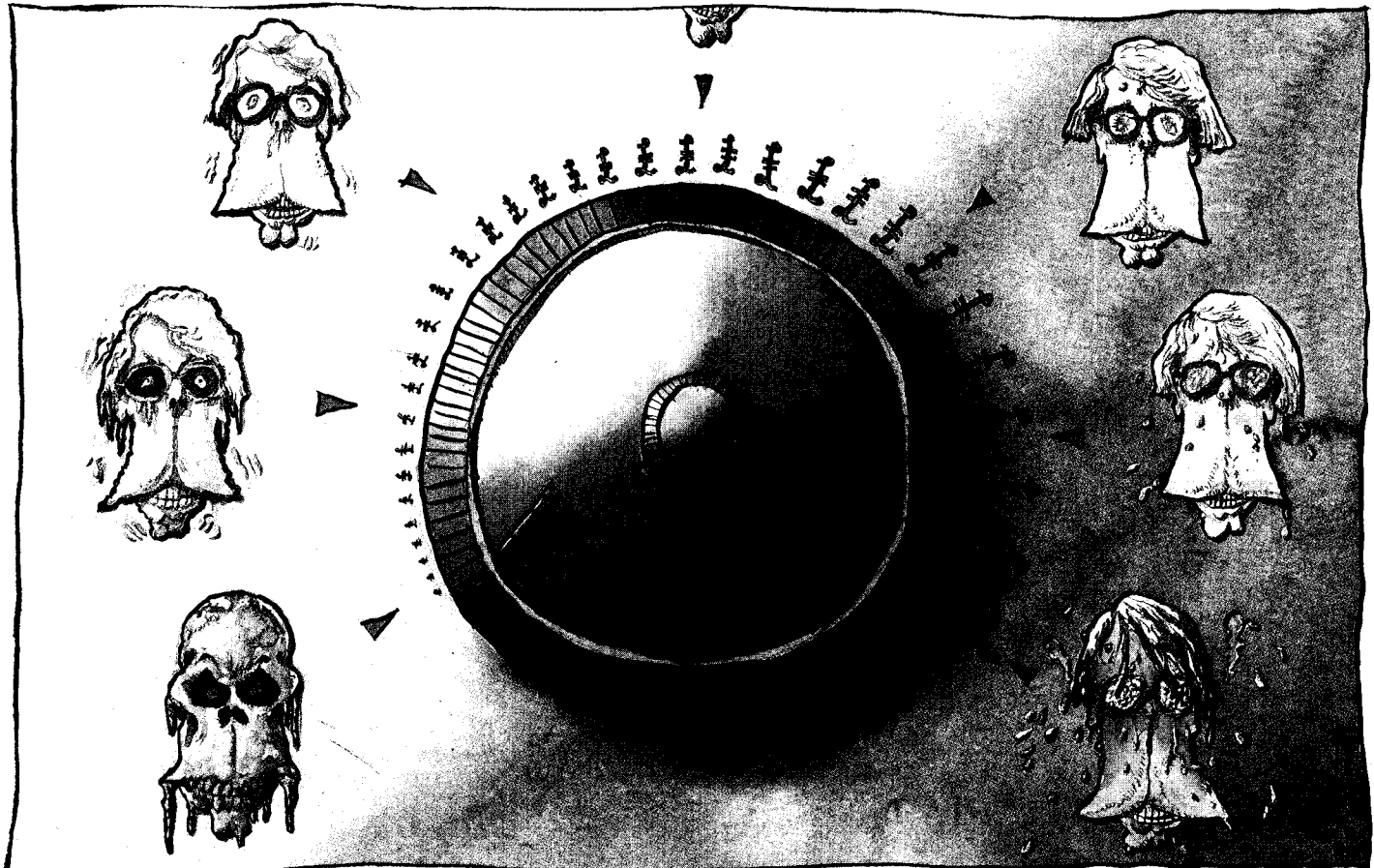
The public's attitude towards crime, however, remains hard-line. Further results of the

NOP poll on crime and punishment, published on 30 November in the *Independent* found that 80 per cent of people believed that crime was caused by the police "not having enough powers"; 90 per cent by lack of discipline in schools; and 88 per cent by too lenient court sentences. Support for capital punishment remains high at 70 per cent; and more people than in 1985 are sceptical about claims that poverty and poor housing (81 per cent) and unemployment (87 per cent) are causes of crime. But the percentage of those who believe taking soft drugs such as cannabis or marijuana should remain a criminal offence is falling.

More evidence that people's personal morality is changing can be found in MORI's survey, published in the *Sun* on 10 November, which found that half of all single women, and 75 per cent of men, had had a one-night stand and one in five woman had had sex with a man on the day they met. But, "amazingly", reports the *Sun*, most people said they were looking for love, not sex.

FELIX BENNETT

New temperature gauge to be fitted to all domestic heaters...



A detailed black and white map of the Old Town area in Boston. The map shows a grid of streets including North Street, South Street, and various lanes and alleys. Key landmarks are labeled, such as the Town Hall, the Old State House, and the Old North Church. The map is oriented with North at the top. The drawing style is a detailed line art, showing building footprints and street layouts. The map covers the area from the waterfront to the North End, and from the Old State House to the Old North Church. The map is a historical representation of the area, showing the layout of the streets and buildings as they were in the past. The map is a valuable resource for understanding the history and geography of Old Town Boston. The map is a detailed line art, showing building footprints and street layouts. The map is oriented with North at the top. The map covers the area from the waterfront to the North End, and from the Old State House to the Old North Church. The map is a historical representation of the area, showing the layout of the streets and buildings as they were in the past. The map is a valuable resource for understanding the history and geography of Old Town Boston.

The rumblings continue over the coup against the Tribune group's former secretary, Peter Hain. With typical Labour precision timing, three of his supporters (including Helen Jackson and Kevin McNamara) turned up too late to vote. Had they been present, there would have been a tie between Hain and Janet Anderson, forcing the new chair, Angela Eagle to cast her vote (presumably in favour of the incumbent). It is interesting to note the shadow cabinet turnout: Gordon Brown, Tony Blair and Harriet Harman arrived to support Anderson; but Robin Cook, John Prescott and Frank Dobson were otherwise engaged. This week, Gordon Brown published a "Tribune" pamphlet on closing tax loopholes, and Hain, who lost his position ostensibly because of confusion between his Tribune Group and *Tribune* newspaper pamphlets, has cheekily asked the chair when the group actually agreed to Brown's publication. The answer, of course, is it didn't have to. The answer was published by *Tribune* newspaper.

burglary, in which the computerised memory bank for producing the magazine was stolen. Funny thing is, the exact same component was stolen in the last burglary, and is virtually worthless to anyone else. The magazine now suspects that an inside campaign of sabotage is being waged against it. "It's clearly someone who has a vindictive attitude towards us," a spokeswoman for the magazine tells Shoreditch. Editor John Bird is taking a more feisty stance. "But don't feel sorry for us. Our insurance premiums will go through the roof. We will have to take on full-time security coverage. But we will stick to our task of helping the homeless help themselves," he announced this week. "No amount of sabotage will weaken our resolve to do just that." He does, however, add a plaintive appeal to his declaration of defiance: "If among our readership there is a generous security firm that wants the prestigious job of keeping the Big Issue secure—for peanuts—then we'd like to hear from them."

OK, so here's a question I haven't yet had a decent, scientific answer to: why reprocess spent fuel, when the total volume of radioactive waste to dispose of by the end increases by a staggering 189 times? Why not just bury the smaller amount in the first place? Shore-ditch is waiting for an answer.

FOURTH ESTATE

25 November: The *Daily Star* offers its predictable response to the guilty verdicts at the end of the James Bulger murder trial: "Meanwhile, the simple truth is that when we look at Bobby Thompson and Jon Venables, we are staring pure evil in the face. Wickedness has existed since the dawn of man. Do-gooders will tell us that there is no such thing . . . They will insist that James Bulger's killers will, after elaborate therapy and re-education, be fit to rejoin the world. NOT IN A MILLION YEARS. As long as they draw breath, they must never be released."

26 November: In a front page guaranteed to make any child desperate to see the film at the first opportunity, the *Sun* jumps on the bandwagon currently blaming the killing of James Bulger on the third-rate horror flick *Child's Play 3*: "For the sake of ALL our kids . . . BURN YOUR VIDEO NASTY."

30 November: "All we need is hope, Ken." A last-minute pre-budget appeal from the *Sun* to the Chancellor: "Today he must put our money where his mouth is. SPENDING must be cut, however unpopular. Two billion pounds would be a start . . . four billion would be better."

The *Sun*, of course, is happier. "WONDER-FUEL, KEN—Old folk cheer his VAT aid for needy," is how it sees things. "It is heartening to see the Chancellor do so much that the *Sun* has long campaigned for . . . If Mr Clarke can pull it off, he won't be Chancellor in the year 2000. He'll be Prime Minister. And a damned good one, too."

During the Napoleonic Wars an ape was washed ashore after a shipwreck. Local people believed it to be a Frenchman and it was first captured and then, when it failed to explain itself satisfactorily, it was hanged.

The superstitious notion of propitiatory sacrifices seems to be widely spread in human culture. According to some versions of the legend, Agamemnon had to sacrifice his own daughter in order to raise the wind that would blow the Greek fleet to Troy. More recently, Voltaire's *Candide* arrived in England just in time to see an admiral being executed after a naval failure "*pour encourager les autres*".

And this week, in response to the conclusion of the James Bulger murder trial, the *Sun* called for videos of the recent movie, *Child's Play III* ("a feeble horror yarn, as low on ideas as scares", my new *Radio Times Film and Video Guide* tells me) to be ceremonially burned. BSKyB cancelled a proposed screening of the film. And on the letters page of another branch of the News International empire, *The Times*, a correspondent asked rhetorically: "How much longer are we going to listen to those who would deny the connection between the unfettered availability of this type of foul violence and the blood-chilling events that unfolded in Preston?"

I didn't know anybody was listening. We have the most stringently fettered video industry in the western world. By contrast, the most extraordinary kinds of violent pornography are freely available in Japan, yet the crime rate is far below that of Britain, let alone the United States.

Let's turn the problem around. Imagine if you were setting out to cause the deaths of children and you decided to use the screening of violent videos as a means of achieving it. The amount of time that children spend watching television is genuinely appalling, and it seems plausible that many children now watch adult films at home, both on video and off transmission, because of the lax supervision of their guardians. What is there to show for it? In the case of the James Bulger murder, there is the supposed resemblance of the crime to a video borrowed by the parents of the subordinate boy. This would be tenuous enough even were it not for the fact that the father insisted to the police that his son had not actually seen the video.

Violent videos would be jettisoned in favour of a method about which there is no debate as to cause and effect, namely the hundreds of children who die in road crashes every year. Are these terrible figures greeted by hysterical "why-oh-why?" letters to the *Times* demanding a huge shift in resources from road-building to rail-modernisation?

One of the scandals of our public debate is that the media and much of the public become preoccupied with the weird, though remote, danger at the expense of the boringly common, far more pressing and more easily remediable hazard. Compare the publicity about the dubious leukaemia clusters in the vicinity of nuclear power stations with the mundane health risks faced by workers in the mining industry. This is clearly an aspect of human psychology—think of all the people who are



Horrific murders will happen, with or without videos, says Sean French

frightened of flying while continuing to smoke—yet it should be the duty of the media and government to resist panic.

Making use of the panic for ideological ends generally proves too tempting. News International's *Sunday Times* leader said: "There is an old saying from Burke: all that is needed for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing. That is part of the problem as the score and more of witnesses, who saw James being dragged away to his death and did nothing, must now understand all too well."

The problem, apparently, is that "we have come to believe too much in a 'pluralist society' in which the only absolute good is freedom to do as we wish and to become what we are." Oh, good, I thought, the *Sunday Times* is finally turning on Margaret "There is no such thing as society" Thatcher, but I was wrong. It turned out that they were attacking the sixties once more.

I didn't see any signs of indifference. One of the many startling aspects of the case was the number of strangers who approached the boys as they dragged James Bulger to his death. On each occasion the boys had a plausible excuse: they were taking him home or to the nearby police station. Are concerned citizens now supposed to start forcibly removing crying children from their apparent siblings and parents just in case a murder might be about to be committed? Notice the peaks and troughs in the waves of moral panic. Social workers are denounced for allowing children like Jasmine Beckford to die at the hands of their parents. Right, won't get fooled again, the social services departments vow, and when they see evidence of abuse in Cleveland they swoop and remove everybody who might be at risk, and are denounced for breaking up families, stigmatising adults and traumatising children. I suspect that the passers-by in the Bulger case, concerned though they were, were discouraged by the child abuse publicity. People who

used to make friends with children they met in the park or the street might now feel justifiably nervous about even approaching a small child, let alone attempting to seize him from two boys claiming to be his brothers.

Now there will presumably be a rash of concerned adults grabbing any child who sheds a tear in public. Since I spend much of my time dragging howling children round my local supermarkets, I can anticipate some interesting tugs of war across the cooked meats in the next few months. Until, that is, some adult grabs a crying child pretending to rescue him and does something atrocious, after which we can all panic about something else.

The Bulger case is not a unique product of the 1990s video culture. Mary Bell had seen no videos and no significant violence on television except for the occasional exterminating dalek when she strangled two small children in 1969. That was blamed on the dysfunctional family. The Moors murders, a few years earlier, were blamed by Colin Wilson on the effects of Nietzsche on a limited intelligence. On the other hand, the Leopold and Loeb case was explained by the effects of Nietzsche on two immature prodigies, who, in 1924, set out to demonstrate their superiority by kidnapping and murdering their cousin, Bobbie Franks. In an appallingly funny comic routine, Lenny Bruce (himself Jewish) referred to the embarrassing (to some) fact that the two killers were Jewish: "They were just nice Jewish boys," he would say, "and Bobbie Franks was just a snotty-nosed kid who was asking for it." When Patrick Hamilton dramatised the idea in his successful play, *Rope*, he concentrated more (though he could only be oblique about this, even in private) on the homosexuality of the murderers. (To Hamilton's horror, Hitchcock brought this out even more strongly in his film version, 20 years later.) The point, if there is one, is that these cases, similar in their extremity and randomness, are also entirely different. The police officer in charge said he wanted some expert one day to tell him why the Bulger murder happened. I doubt whether the sort of reason he is looking for will ever emerge. It's probably more obvious than that: some people, in certain circumstances, will do something bad just to see what it's like. Dostoyevsky and Camus would probably be more help than the psychologists' reports.

There might have been duller but also more urgent failures exposed by this terrible crime.

A public inquiry might explore, for example, why the current educational system discourages schools from devoting resources to the most recalcitrant pupils, just as the current medical system discourages GPs from taking on poor or old patients who are likely to suffer from the chronic illnesses that tend to accompany poverty. They're just following the example of our supermarkets that have reasoned that poor customers are not worth the trouble and arrange the locations, design and prices of their stores to discourage them. But let's not bother with complicated issues like this, let's just hang the monkey, the way they did in the good old days.



Passing the parcel with people's lives?

Try not to get drowned in the semantics. Whether the British government's contacts, through intermediaries, with the IRA/Sinn Fein were "talks", "negotiations", or something else does not matter. If they led to a permanent cessation of IRA violence, followed by the same from the UDA and allies, few rational people would care how the contacts were made.

The only sensible way to judge the likelihood that peace will emerge from the government-IRA colloquium is to consider the three means by which Irish republicanism can pursue its unwavering objective—stated with an uncompromising zeal that seemed to shake the British side—of a united Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew would say that this is irrelevant, because of the oral IRA message he received: "The conflict is over, but we need your advice on how to bring it to a close." To the British, that meant the IRA wanted to stop violence. But Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein says the message is counterfeit, and that Mayhew and Major are liars. Gerry Adams says it is the British who must sue for peace. Whoever is right, this does not suggest the two sides are close to each other.

Accept, for the purposes of clarification, the Sinn Fein contention that this is not a case of a war-weary IRA seeking British help to get off its hook of violence, and let us consider the three ways in which a united Ireland—not only its objective, but that of constitutional nationalists like the SDLP and the Irish government—might be sought.

The first is negotiation, and specifically persuasion of the Unionists. Sir Patrick points out that 67 per cent of people in Northern Ireland vote for parties supporting the Union (not only Unionists, but the Alliance Party). They have done so consistently for many

decades. So that does not look a fruitful path.

The second possible course is violence. Outside Sinn Fein, every shade of political opinion including, most vehemently, constitutional nationalist opinion, says 25 years of that has brought Irish unity no nearer. If the British withdrew, there would be inter-communal fighting on a scale not yet seen: civil war would be too tidy a word for it. And the probable outcome of that would be, not a united Ireland, but two nasty little sectarian states—or "statelets", to use a favourite IRA pejorative for Northern Ireland.

That leaves diplomacy, which is what the IRA side of the communicating process thinks it was about. This concentrates on the finding of "language" to which people of divergent views can put their names, sometimes attaching different meaning to the "language". Much of the Irish government's efforts, and apparently those of John Hume and Gerry Adams, also fall under this heading. Its danger lies in ambiguity, the abiding curse of Irish "settlements".

Ironically, the IRA's belief that this is what Mayhew and McGuinness were, vicariously, engaged in is shared by many Unionists, and it is what worries them. They have long suspected that elements in what they call "the British Establishment"—civil servants, rather than ministers—want to be rid of them.

Their present suspicion presumably centres on what Richard Norton-Taylor, a shrewd observer of spooks, wrote in Monday's *Guardian* about the "unauthorised" meetings between MI6 and the IRA: "The Foreign Office was the motor behind the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which it recognised from the beginning as no more than a temporary stop-gap initiative." Are MI6 agents who dabble with verbal formulas for an all-Ireland solution, just fantasising freebooters, like Peter Wright and his chums when they tried to undermine the Wilson government? They may be, and Sir Patrick's rhetoric gives the IRA scant encouragement to think otherwise. But Whitehall, sadly, is not currently in good shape to convince Unionists of anything that involves undercover diplomacy.

So readers who want to understand what is going on are advised not to take much notice of Westminster theatricals. Ian Paisley's suspension from the Commons, after accusing Mayhew of "falsehood", and refusing to withdraw when requested by the Speaker, struck me as another example of his self-destructive penchant for the irrelevant gesture.

But during the vote for his suspension, I was interested to hear the indignation of a respected colleague: not directed, like my own, at the Reverend Doctor, but at Madam Speaker, for preventing Paisley, and the Commons, discussing in good set terms what he saw as a vital issue, the veracity of the government. When I feebly suggested that Pais-

ley might have avoided the row by adopting Churchill's phrase, and saying the minister was "guilty of terminological inexactitude", my colleague dismissed me with contumely.

He may have been right, if you think the veracity of the government is the central issue this week. I do not, and was pleased to see that the opposition parties did not press that too far. The real issue is whether ministers had any serious prospect of facilitating an end, by the IRA, of its 25 years of terrorism.

"Facilitating?" [the reader may expostulate]; What has happened to old Cole: first 'terminological inexactitude', then 'facilitating'. You don't need to 'facilitate' anybody to end violence; they either go on killing people or they don't. Before jumping to that sensible conclusion, consider what the British government maintains the IRA said in the first of this series of exchanges last February.

The British version of an oral message from the IRA leadership reads: "The conflict is over, but we need your advice on how to bring it to a close. We wish to have an unannounced ceasefire in order to hold dialogue leading to peace. We cannot announce such a move, as it will lead to confusion for the volunteers, because the press will misinterpret it as surrender. We cannot meet the Secretary of State's public renunciation of violence, but it would be given privately as long as we were sure we were not being tricked."

You can see why Whitehall was encouraged to send messages back. Martin McGuinness says he never sent any such message. Gerry Adams says: "John Major knows what he needs to do. He knows that the Irish peace

initiative deals with the substantive issues... To use the words of John Hume, Mr Major holds the key." (The British and Irish public do not know from John Hume what this "key" is.)

Circumstantial evidence that the British version of the original IRA message may be true comes in the government's message of 19

March, which uses phrases like: "What is being sought at this stage is advice"; and "It is understood that in the first instance [a halt to violence] would have to be unannounced". These are certainly answers to the alleged IRA opening message quoted above. It is hard to believe Whitehall invented such a message to respond to. Even in this byzantine affair, what would be the point? Yet what is the point of the IRA writing another document (admittedly months later), suggesting that it is they who are "responding directly to your [the British government's] request for advice"?

My doubts, expressed last week, are now stronger: Are the parties to this peace process so sure that it will break down that they are each manoeuvring to see that they do not get the blame for it? If that were the case, this would be the most cynical game of pass-the-parcel with people's lives that either politicians, diplomats or terrorists could devise.

Are the parties to this peace process so sure it will break down that they are each manoeuvring to see they aren't blamed

Japan poised for reform

Prime minister of Japan, Morihiro Hosokawa, entered the home stretch in his race against time to redraw the electoral map of Japan last week when the House of Councillors (upper house of parliament) began to debate his package of political reform bills. The quietly radical Hosokawa has staked his premiership on passing the bills by the end of the year, and with the current Diet session due to end on 15 December, he has less than a fortnight to steer them through the upper house into law.

His two immediate predecessors, Kiichi Miyazawa and Toshiki Kaifu, were both brought down by their failure to deliver promised reforms. But they were little more than front men in the powerful and factious Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and failure lay in the lack of personal political clout to unite a party only half-heartedly interested in reforming an electoral system in its favour.

Hosokawa, by contrast, though heading a fragile coalition of seven parties, is basking in unprecedented personal popularity and commands majorities in both houses of parliament. Even so, a smooth passage is by no means a foregone conclusion as the LDP, despite looking listless in opposition after 38 years in power, is intent on disruption. It managed to delay commencement of debate and could well force an extension of the session with the aim of putting pressure on Hosokawa to resign, as he said he would if the bills are not passed this year. A few wayward independents and maverick socialists could make the vote itself a close-run thing.

Hosokawa cleared the major hurdle on 18 November when the four bills were passed in the more powerful lower chamber, the House of Representatives, by 270 votes to 226, a majority bloated by 13 LDP members who voted with the government and four who abstained. Similarly, five socialists in the coalition's largest party, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), fearing the proposed reforms would cut into SDP support, voted against the bills.

But the lower house proceedings revealed a unique facet of Japanese political life. There was no question of a simple parliamentary vote on the elected government's bills, despite its clear majority. The opposition had come up with a reform package, too, and long hours were spent trying to reach consensus.

The crux was reform of the lower house. The government proposed to reduce the number of seats from 511 to 500, with 250 elected from single-seat districts and 250 by proportional representation. The LDP proposed 300 single seats, a system thought to favour the major parties, and 171 on a proportional basis. Two days before the vote, in a late-night tête-à-tête with Yohei Kono, Miyazawa's successor as LDP president, Hosokawa offered



to raise the number of single-seat districts to 274, while reducing the government's proposal of 41.4 billion yen in state subsidies to political parties to the LDP's proposed figure of 30.8 billion yen. Kono rejected the offer, and afterwards both sides said that no compromise had been reached.

Curiously, however, the government proceeded to water down its original bills to include both rejected offers, a move that drew little comment or explanation in the media. Perhaps Hosokawa already had an eye on the upper house, where his majority is slimmer, and was hoping that the government's good faith in pursuing a "unilateral compromise" would placate potential obstructionists there.

The proposal now on the table is for a lower house of 500 seats, 274 from single-seat districts and 226 elected by PR. Major parties will receive state subsidies totaling 30.9 billion yen and donations to parties exceeding 50,000 yen will have to be disclosed.

But the most radical reform is the banning of donations to individual politicians. Under the present system of multi-seat districts, candidates from the same party often run against each other, and gift-giving and other acts of financial munificence are often the key to acquiring votes. Cases are legion of influential politicians amassing huge fortunes in "donations". But it is a timely move. Only last week it came to light that Hosokawa himself received 19 million yen between 1990-91 in political donations from the Sagawa Kyubin transport group, the firm at the heart of a huge financial scandal last year that brought about the downfall of LDP don Shin Kanemaru.

Hosokawa ensured that payment was made in small enough instalments to avoid the legal requirement of disclosing the amount and name of the contributor, and it is not likely to do his image any harm. But it might confirm the sceptics in their view that even Hosokawa's reforms will not stamp out so deeply ingrained and widespread a practice.

Anthony Head

No change in Mexico

20 YEARS AGO

7 December 1973
"Mr Heath's Silent Night"

The New Statesman comments on the burgeoning British economic crisis in the face of the oil-price explosion

Unlike other western powers, Britain faces the crisis from a position that was already weak. Last month's balance of trade figures—a gap of £300 million—can only be described as terrifying. The pound continues to float feebly, its perpetual devaluation pushing up the cost of everything we buy abroad even without the swingeing oil price increases. At home, inflation was already accelerating before the oil weapon was deployed: the latest cost-of-living index figure showed the biggest single monthly rise in food prices for 18 years.

To pretend, as the Prime Minister does, that we simply face a local difficulty that could quickly be rectified if only the unions behave themselves amounts to a clumsy and inept deception. As unemployment and short-time working begin to affect industry, as output falls and exports wither, and as angry workers express their dissatisfaction in uncomfortable forms of industrial action, the people of Britain will want to know why the truth was for so long concealed from them.

An important ritual in what passes for Mexican democracy took place this week. On Sunday the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) annointed the social development minister, Luis Donaldo Colosio, as its candidate for next year's presidential election. The PRI has been in power since 1929 and he is all but sure to replace current President Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

The decision comes barely a week after the US Congress approved the North American Free Trade Agreement. If the remaining details can be sorted out, tariffs on goods traded among the US and Canada will be reduced to nothing over the next 15 years.

Precisely what Nafta will mean for Mexico is unclear. Its supporters among the political class argue that foreign investment will be the agreement's main fruit: European and Japanese companies will leap at the chance to build factories in low-wage Mexico that have access to the giant North American market. Mexican exporters will also benefit, they say.

On the other hand, sceptics believe that the main beneficiary of Nafta will be the US and Canada. Older Mexican factories producing mainly for the domestic market will be forced to close as goods flood in from the north, they argue, while the quarter of the population who lives off the land will be hard pushed to compete with American farmers. Most Mexican growers are peasants and smallholders

and lack the irrigation, fertilisers and hardware available to their counterparts.

But much of the Nafta debate has revolved around politics, not economics, with proponents arguing that the agreement would help further democracy in Mexico. So far, however, Nafta's supposed democratising effects have been difficult to discern. The PRI's nomination of Colosio as its presidential candidate was at the very least mysterious: if he was not chosen by the current president alone, the decision was made by a tiny internal party cabal. More important, there are few signs that the election next year will be any more democratic than previous ballots.

Large-scale electoral fraud has been a constant of Mexico's history and allegedly played a major part in securing Salinas' election five years ago. This year, there has been a massive drive to provide voters with identification cards, complete with fingerprint and photograph. But boxes of fake IDs have already been found, and in one recent state election persons unknown ruined the registration process by mixing nitric acid with the ink used to match voters' fingerprints with their cards.

Political liberty is also circumscribed in the popular media. Cuauhtémoc Cardenas, the main opposition candidate in 1988, who is running again, was recently permitted to be interviewed on television for the first time in five years. His appearance could be taken as a sign of greater openness—but had rather more to do with the government's need to curry favour with Washington.

Worse, dozens of political activists, primarily in Cardenas' Party of the Democratic Revolution, have been murdered since the 1988 elections, and political intimidation is rife—albeit sometimes at the level of the ridiculous. Cardenas was recently ambushed by a group of transvestites hired by his political opponents. The photos were slapped across pro-government newspapers throughout the country, and, although the manoeuvre backfired when the payoff was discovered, Cardenas was seriously embarrassed.

For all this, it seems unlikely that Colosio will need any further advantages to win next August beyond those already given him by his government post and the formidable organisation of his party. Salinas is overwhelmingly popular, largely because of his economic reforms, and his support looks strong enough to push through his chosen man.

Moreover, although the opposition parties are often depicted as simple democrats pitted against the authoritarians of the ruling party, a closer look tells a different story. Cardenas and his supporters split from the PRI during the unpopular presidency of Miguel de la Madrid, but most of them had faithfully served the system for the 20 years before. There is little novelty in their policies or democracy in their organisation. There was no hint that anyone but Cardenas could be the candidate.

Other opposition parties, notably the pro-business National Action Party, are more open. But if the Mexican political system is to get out of its rut, it is not just the governing party that will have to change its spots.

Daniel Dombey

LETTER FROM ALGIERS

"In the past few days, six of our colleagues have been visited by very strange characters who were up to no good. I want you all to be very careful, especially when you're going home." So begins the morning editorial meeting at *El Watan*, Algeria's leading independent daily. Omar Belhouchet, the paper's director, knows what he is talking about: on 17 May this year, he realised he was a marked man. "It was eight o'clock in the morning and I was taking my children to school as usual. As my daughter got out of the car, I saw someone jump over the balustrade and come quickly behind the car. Only when he got within a metre of the driver's window did I realise that he'd come to assassinate me. Thankfully, the engine was still running. I put the car in first gear, lay down on the passenger seat and took off. Five bullets hit the car, but I survived unharmed."

Who shoots writers? The simple answer is to lay the blame at the door of Islamic fundamentalists. The fundamentalists have been waging war on the government and the establishment ever since the democratic electoral process was interrupted in January 1992 and they were deprived of the victory that would almost certainly have been theirs. Although they began by targeting police and members of the security forces, they soon moved on to the country's leading intellectuals.

In June, the fundamentalists admitted to at least one of the murders, that of journalist and newspaper editor Tahar Djaout. Official Islamic publications denounced Djaout as a traitor and enemy of Islam, presumably because of the articles in which he damned fundamentalism as totalitarian, obscurantist and repressive.

Five days after Djaout's shooting, Algerian television broadcast an interview with a man the police claimed had been the driver of the getaway car. What he said when asked why they had chosen Tahar Djaout is revealing. "Because he was a good writer. He knew how to influence the Muslim people."

But if the fundamentalists have a vested interest in silencing journalists, they are not the only ones. Many point the finger at reactionary forces close to the Front de Libération National, the socialist party that ruled Algeria's one-party state for almost 30 years until riots on the streets of Algiers in 1988 forced it to announce the first-ever multi-party elections. Although this theory has never been proven, it is true that, ever since the independent press was established in 1990, it has been subjected to pressure from the establishment. *El Watan*, for example, was suspended for 11 days at the beginning of this year for publishing information "judged prejudicial to an inquest in a case deemed secret for reasons of national

defence". Belhouchet and five of his staff were held for a week in police custody.

Another possible factor in the murders points to a branch of the press itself. Algeria is a society divided between "Arabophones" and "Francophones". Although most people speak both languages, the Arabophones identify more with the Arab culture, history and language; the Francophones, with the culture, history and language of the former colonial ruler—France.

The press reflects this division—in a war of words fought between independent French papers like *El Watan* and public-sector (government-subsidised) Arabic papers like *Essalem*. *Essalem* editor Mohammed Abess has openly called for an end to the French press in Algeria. "There is no place, there is no need for it in Algeria." Franco-phone writers say this amounts to condoning the murder of French-speaking journalists.

What is at stake here is freedom of speech. In Algeria, writing that encourages poorly educated people to think for themselves is dangerous. For the fundamentalists, it is writing that opposes their dream of an Islamic state. For the establishment, it is writing that exposes corruption and advocates

reducing the power of the army. For the Arabic press, it is writing in French that talks of an Algeria more western than Arabic in identity.

At Tahar Djaout's funeral in June, his colleague, Arezki Metref, delivered a homage in which he voiced the opinion of many outside Algeria as well as

within: "Tahar Djaout has been murdered. How many more will be killed before justice is done? What kind of state accepts that its intellectual elite lives in hiding?" Like many others, Metref has since left Algeria. He lives in hiding in Europe.

To date, none of Omar Belhouchet's 35 staff has left the paper or refused assignments. Some now write under pseudonyms, and some no longer sleep at home, but the paper still appears every day. Belhouchet himself now sees his children only once a week: it's too dangerous for them to live with him. Is it worth it? "Without a doubt. To give up would be a victory for the terrorists. Their goal is to silence free speech. The duty of the journalist is to shed light, to tell the truth, whatever the consequences." Belhouchet has just been to New York to collect an award for press freedom from the American Committee for the Protection of Journalists. He and other unsung heroes of Algeria write on.

Catherine Seddon

Catherine Seddon is the producer of "Shooting the writer", a documentary introduced by Salman Rushdie, which will be broadcast at 8.10pm on Wednesday 8 December on BBC2

In Algeria, any writing that might encourage people to think for themselves is dangerous

Scotland's remote Western Isles are suffering from a haemorrhage of young people. **Douglas Fraser** reports on the struggle to staunch the flow

Journey into exile

The island's teenagers gather in the narrow lanes of Stornoway, sheltering from driving rain in doorways and chip shops. Swilling McEwan's Export and aggressively drunk with the frustration of Lewis life, they seem drawn each night towards the pier to remind themselves it will soon be their turn to leave.

The *Suilven*, 86 metres of ageing Caledonian MacBrayne ferry, is berthed there, its generators humming in expectation of the 5am departure. For two decades, it has been crossing the Minch from Ullapool, representing a lifeline to these Outer Hebridean islands.

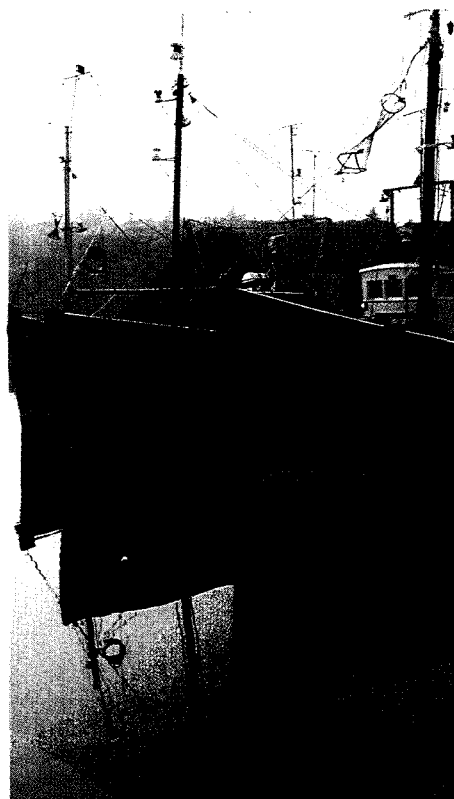
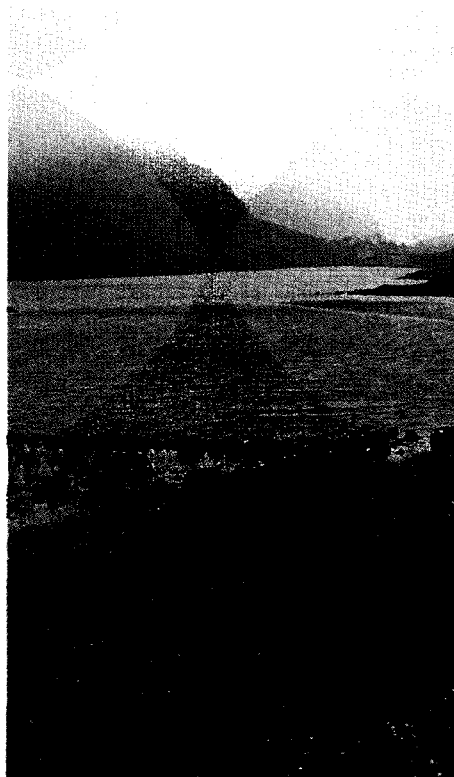
Cal-Mac car-deck containers yield the material comforts that support a precarious existence and account for more than £55 million of external trade deficit each year. But the passenger deck on the return passage carries a heavy cost for which there is no financial accounting—the export of a human cargo that sometimes seems to draw the lifeblood out of such island communities. With a long, bitter history of being cleared off their crofting land—shipped to Glasgow and to Canada to make space for sheep and landlords' estate management—the Hebrideans are still suffering from modern-day clearances.

In Stornoway's secondary school, the Nicolson Institute, a bored and reticent fifth-year class registers a three-to-one majority expecting to end up elsewhere. "It's too quiet here," says one girl. "Everybody's close-knit, and there's not a lot for people of our age to do. There's nowhere we can go at the weekend, and there's nowhere to meet up with friends."

The pupils speak of the teenage tedium that descends on Lewis throughout the Sabbath, as the dominant Free Church of Scotland frowns darkly on most youthful pastimes, favouring instead an uncompromising preaching of The Word and psalms sung in haunting, unaccompanied Gaelic. They talk of the claustrophobia of island life. "After 18 years, they want to go a bit wild," explains one sixth-year pupil, who values Lewis' distinctive church culture, but is bound for a medical training at Edinburgh University. "But you can't go wild without your parents finding out. On any island, whether there is a strong religious background or not, people are going to find out about things."

It's not just the call of the wild that lures young people across the Minch to the mainland. It's also the lack of opportunity for them at home. In the Nicolson Institute's entrance hall, a huge noticeboard marked "careers" is left blank and bleak.

The tourist industry is one of the areas of slow growth. But, serving breakfast in a Stornoway hotel, a young woman says it holds no



The islands have marvellous scenery (top) and a precarious fishing industry (bottom), but little else to keep their youngsters

further attraction for her. She is to go to college in Aberdeen, and wants to emigrate to the United States. "I left school four years ago, and everyone in my year has left the island," she says. "Or at least, those who stayed aren't doing anything with their lives. They're just standing round street corners getting into trouble. The drugs around here are that bad."

With poor local job opportunities, pupils stay on at school in high numbers. That is becoming the case throughout Britain, as the teenage job market offers so little. But the Western Isles—including Lewis, Harris, the Uists, Benbecula and Barra—traditionally have the highest staying-on rate in Scotland.

Even the pupils at the Nicolson admit that around 40 of the 200 in the final year of secondary school should not be there. They are achieving little; the aim of passing Higher exams is not appropriate; and many should be in vocational training. But their friends are still at school, it feels safe, and leaving carries with it the strong likelihood that they will have to leave the island as well.

Joan Mackay left Lewis when she left school, and has been a teacher on the mainland for 13 years. "You grow up knowing you're going to go," she says. "That's the hardest thing for your parents. The going away at 18 is almost like a rite of passage."

"I couldn't wait to go, because there was a world out there to be discovered. There was a whole group of us who knew we were going to leave, though one guy freaked us out by taking a job in the local bank. Then at the end of studying, that's another crucial time to decide—are you going to go back?"

A survey, published earlier this year by the Western Isles Education-Business Partnership, has done much to illuminate the modern clearances over the past 30 years. It found that, overall, 46 per cent of school leavers from the Western Isles had left the islands. Fifty-nine per cent of those born in 1950 went straight into local employment after leaving school. By 1991, only 13 per cent of school-leavers were doing so. The survey also found that more young people are being driven away now, not only because of poor opportunities at home, but because of what one Edinburgh educationist describes as the islands' "relentlessly effective education system".

Passing enough Higher exams to get into university has become more widespread over the years, and those who get the necessary grades are becoming more likely to go. Those who left two years ago included 93 per cent of those in the islands' top academic bracket—those with three or more Higher exam passes. "We're losing the cream of our young people every year, and we're not seeing them return," says a teacher at the Nicolson Institute. Exile is a high price to pay for their success.

There are patterns here that will come as little surprise to others in Britain's most remote, rural communities. Gill Jones, of Edinburgh University's Centre for Educational Sociology, has been studying the young rural school leavers of Scotland. Compared with people from towns, they are twice as likely to leave home by the age of 19, in what she describes as the "survival strategy" that school leavers need to adopt in coping with adult life. And six out of ten admit to

finding problems like loneliness when they do so, significantly more than among urban youngsters.

"Too often, it seems, leaving home in a rural area means leaving the community and, too often, it may be a step taken unwillingly—a consequence of constraint or at best of limited choice," says Jones. "Some out-migration may be necessary, but many young people who migrate to the towns have problems when they get there, miss community support and may encounter homelessness and unemployment. Life in rural communities may seem dead-end to many, but is there any guarantee that town life is going to be better?"

For the Western Isles, outward migration carries an added sting, the intensity of being exiled from close-knit communities across the water, resonating strongly with that cruel history of forced departure by sea. It results in what is called in Gaelic *cianalas*—a dreary melancholic homesickness in which Celts admit they are inclined to wallow more than others. "It's to do with memories," says Joan Mackay. "And it's to do with knowing you've left and you can't go back in your lifetime."

Cianalas is sparked by the wealth of Celtic music, with bands like Runrig and Capercaillie, now rendered trendy throughout Scotland. It is helped by the dramatic growth in Gaelic broadcasting, and it is toasted in the pubs where islanders hang out—the Park Bar in Edinburgh's West End Hotel.

True, there are those who prefer to be away. (Among the responses to the 30-year survey were comments like: "After being unemployed in Lewis when I left school, the only way I would go back is in a pine box.") But most of the people who have left the island since 1950 said they wanted to return. It was evident in all sections of the community, but particularly in the young and in men.

So with such highly educated talent, and a quality of life many mainlanders would adore, the Western Isles is becoming aware of the potential it has to regenerate its economy and its culture through the return of native sons and daughters. But it has some large hurdles to overcome.

Some return for work, but for those with qualifications, it is often to jobs and pay below their potential. They face an economy with an average income half that of the UK average. Crofting is barely viable, while fishing, oil-related construction and weaving swing from boom to bust. And, as the rector of the Nicolson observes, the community puts more value on the caring professions than on entrepreneurial ability. There are too many returnees in the health and teaching professions and not enough with the business acumen to be job creators.

The 30-year survey also showed that those who do come back are outnumbered by the others who enter work after leaving school and later leave for mainland employment. The drift away seems relentless, with the Western Isles one of the few parts of rural Scotland still seeing depopulation. It is rela-

tively rare for even the so-called "white settlers" from urban Scotland and England to be attracted by Outer Hebridean remoteness.

To the south of Lewis, in the Uists and Benbecula, economic prospects look particularly bleak, given the threatened closure of a Ministry of Defence artillery range. According to the local enterprise company, 40 per cent of local businesses depend on the spending power of the MoD and its squaddies.

The other big employer is Comhairle nan Eilean, the Western Isles Council. It provides the equivalent of 2,200 full-time jobs, or 27 per cent of the Western Isles' workforce, and is credited with giving cohesion and self-confidence to the islands. But it has a low tax base, raising only about 10 per cent of its income locally, and the departure of so many young people leaves it with the costs of care for the school-age and the elderly.

Comhairle nan Eilean is also living with the consequences of having lost £24 million in the collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. Such episodes have gained it special affection for providing a rich source of satirical humour—it has been described by one local writer as "local government to a design of Luis Buñuel, Salvador Dali and Compton Mackenzie on acid". But the council has at least assisted the drive to do something about the exodus of young people, which was the subject of a conference in Stornoway earlier this year.

There are signs of hope. The 30-year survey highlighted the need to advise school leavers on opportunities for vocational training at Stornoway's further education college. And there are chances for the most talented to cash in on the government's £9-million boost for Gaelic broadcasting, which has bred a minicam crew at virtually every corner.

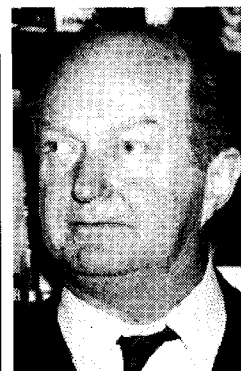
The vast improvement in telecommunications links may also bring jobs to the islands. Already, London's directory inquiries tap into the Highlands, and the possibilities for remote data processing are immense. To counter the departure of young people for education, planners are reviving a 30-year-old dream of creating a University of the Highlands and Islands. The idea is to use the telecom network to produce state-of-the-art distance-learning technology, with Stornoway's college as one of eight hubs.

At the lower end of the technological spectrum, the links with the mainland are set to be improved. Even as the government ponders the privatisation of Caledonian MacBrayne, it has agreed to the building of a new, £16-million ferry to replace the *Suilven*. A faster, bigger ship is seen as the way to unblock the bottleneck on tourism and trade that the *Suilven* represents.

Yet a ship that allows more tourists and more goods to reach Stornoway is also a ship that can take more young people to find their future elsewhere.

Douglas Fraser is education correspondent of the "Scotsman"

INFLUENCES



AUBERON WAUGH
Editor, *The Literary Review*

What books and authors have had the greatest influence on your political beliefs?

Pigs Have Wings by P G Wodehouse (Herbert Jenkins, 1952), which introduced me to the Empress of Bland-

ings, probably the most significant figure in modern fiction. It much influenced my attitude to the pursuit of leisure and the enjoyment of wealth.

Name one film, one book, one play, one poem and one song or piece of music that you would most like everyone to see, read or hear.

Film: *Dead Calm*, directed by Phillip Noyce. A very good rape scene.

Book: *Will This Do?* The autobiography of Auberon Waugh.

Play: *Macbeth*.

Poem: Gray's "Elegy".

Music/song: Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*.

In the early stages of your life, which figures stand out as an important influence on you?

Mr F H R Dix, headmaster, All Hallows, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, stands out as an important influence on me; an angry, violent man, but he managed to teach me my Greek irregular verbs.

What event during your lifetime has had the greatest effect on your political beliefs?

A burglary at Combe Florey in August 1987 which destroyed my confidence in private ownership.

Which political figure—living or dead—do you most admire?

None.

If you could visit any time in history for 24 hours, which would you choose?

I would visit the Crucifixion, to discover what was going on.

What do you consider the greatest threat at present to individual freedom and liberty?

Increasingly vociferous pressure on Home Office issues from the new British working class.

On important matters, whose opinion—other than your own—do you trust most?

It depends on the subject. Possibly Bryan Appleyard.

Who is the greatest prime minister we never had?

The greatest prime minister we never had is the Reverend Sydney Smith (1771-1845), Rector of Combe Florey, Somerset, and Canon of St Paul's Cathedral. He represented Whig commonsense combined with the best possible English wit, and may have been the only Englishman fit for the job of prime minister.

If you could pass one law, what would it be?

I would pass a law to sack one in three public employees every 20 years.

Tom is three, his sister Clare is 18 months old. Two older siblings are in care and about to be adopted. Jack, the father is 24, and was also put into care at the age of nine when his mother had a nervous breakdown. The flat is dirty, and the television is always on. Tom circles his father warily. Jack says he believes in discipline. "I won't let these kids get away with nothing."

Over a period of several weeks, when I visit often, the problem is not just an excess of "discipline", but the erratic manner with which it is dispensed—a difficulty not confined to "deprived" homes. A minor offence overlooked one day or even endorsed as "good" mini-macho activity—"He's a little devil, is our Tom"—receives a heart-stopping wallop the next.

On one visit, Tom and his sister are each given a drink. Clare temporarily loses hers and takes Tom's. Tom protests. His father hits him across the head, knocking him down, takes Tom's drink and gives it to Clare, who now has two. Tom protests even more strongly. He bangs his head repeatedly on the floor, damaging himself, since he has already learnt that this at least allows him to vent his anger—and draws the least amount of further aggravation from adults.

"If you don't fucking shut up, I'll lock you down the cellar," his father says. "Clare has Tom's drink, that's not fair," I suggest. "Life's not fair and the sooner he fucking learns that, the tougher he'll be," Jack says of his son.

Jack was moved 11 times while in care and never consulted once. His education has been disrupted, his childhood stigmatised by the "protection" of the state. Jack believes he isn't worth shit, and the legacy he is passing on to his children is that they're not worth shit either. If he had enough money, he says, he could buy his children happiness. The sadness is that Jack is incapable of giving them a sense of self-esteem.

Margaret and Simon are certainly not from the so-called underclass. They are both doing well in their careers. They leave home at 8am and return by 7.30pm. They work, pay their bills, are kind to animals. They just can't somehow squeeze in time for the children. The "parenting deficit" is alive and well.

Their two girls, aged six and 10, have the benefit of their parents' company for one hour a night in the week—less from their father if he is away. "But we do try to make it up at holidays and weekends," says Margaret.

Angela, the youngest of the two children, throws what are labelled temper tantrums, since that implies it is wilful bad behaviour, rather than the result of parental neglect. The older child is withdrawn and "difficult to handle". "If you loved me," she reasons to no avail, "you'd be here more often."

The inference the two daughters have possibly drawn from life in this affluent, "caring" family is the same that Tom has learned in a different way from his emotionally deprived father; children aren't worth much. A view given a terrible echo in the apparently motiveless killing of James Bulger.

Last week, Mr Justice Morland, the judge in the trial of the killers of James Bulger, asked for an "informed and worthwhile debate" on parenting and video nasties. In January, we usher in the UN Year of the Family and we will also read the government's first, five-



Jamie Bulger's murder has created a moral panic. Does the fault lie with evil children, uncaring adults, the sixties or the market? **Yvonne Roberts** seeks an answer

Teaching children to be bad

yearly report on the progress of the 1991 UN Convention of the Rights of Children.

This time of reappraisal has been sharpened by the evidence heard at the trial of James Bulger's young murderers. Some newspapers wrote that James' death might act as a catalyst and initiate a "new morality". But any debate about a "new morality" first requires an honest analysis of the old one. Instead, what we've witnessed is yet another moral panic.

"You don't make up for your sins in church," says Martin Scorsese in his seventies' film, *Mean Streets*, "You do it at home and you do it in the streets. And the rest is bullshit, you know that?"

Is it possible, asked one of the team on Radio Four's *The Moral Maze* last week, to achieve a moral consensus in a secular, pluralist society? Rabbi Hugo Gryn could see no problem and neither can I. His answer is similar to that which Scorsese offers.

He tells the tale of the pagan who asked the rabbi to tell him all about religion and moral choice. "Don't do unto others what is hateful to you," the rabbi told the pagan. "That's all there is to it. The rest is commentary."

On the same programme, Professor Helen Haste, a researcher into the moral development of children, was asked how to inculcate

in the young a sense of moral responsibility. "Give children respect for themselves and foster in them a respect for others," she replied. "Foster their inclination to show sensitivity and empathy towards others, so they are able to consider the consequences of their actions and to understand that they are part of the social and moral community..."

Moral panics are what happen in times of profound social change. They are also diversions for those in power who prefer that the "social and moral community" is not examined too closely for fear it is found bankrupt.

All moral panics share in common a lack of historical perspective, a selective use and abuse of facts, a misguided addiction for a mythical "better" past and a tendency to witchhunt. Bogies are found that will fruitfully divert attention away from the complexity of the real problems that beset us; these bogies also blind us from seeing who is really responsible for blocking the chances of improvement.

Earlier in the year, the moral panic was about single-parent mothers. Now, it is in demonising children. Even more useful, these demonic children, it is charged, are not born of this age: they are, of course, born of the

sixties. As a result of the sixties, "we" (a coded word for women) have placed the right to do as we please above any sense of duty or responsibility to the community as a whole and to our families in particular. If we fancy something, we have it—and damn the consequences. Want a child? Have one on your own. Or why not two or three?

Through much of the press coverage last week this was the sub-plot: we adults, corrupted by permissiveness, have failed in our duties as parents. As a result the "natural" wickedness of children is now rampant and unchecked. In *The Moral Maze*, Janet Daley spoke with a voice that might have come from the 17th century: "We used to believe in the innate evil of childhood and we used to accept that it was the moral responsibility of all adults to keep it in check . . . by dismantling the concept of evil we've effectively disarmed ourselves . . . left ourselves helpless in the ability to cope with it . . ."

This is the backbone of the present moral panic. Our helplessness in the presence of the infantile evil is allegedly seen in juvenile crime figures. We see it in children who supposedly divorce parents "at whim". We see it in children who cry sex abuse supposedly without foundation, and we see it in children who, no matter how many material goods are given to them, no matter how many new bikes, CDs and Gameboys, play truant and bully and try to do real damage to themselves, and to others, as Jon Venables did, allegedly, "for no reason".

Whether you believe children are born "bad" and must be civilised, or are born, as I believe, with the potential for good, which requires nurturing with praise, if the past 20 years has chronicled anything about children, it's the exposure of the "evil" many of them have experienced at the hands of adults—with much less of a public hue and cry about "morality". Demonising children because of the sins of their fathers seems the ultimate abuse against the already vulnerable.

A child a day is said to die by violent means in the family; Britain locks up more young children than any country in western Europe; one in four children lives in poverty. Scandal after scandal—the abuse in the Bryn Estyn children's home in Wales, the abuse by Jason Dabbs of over 60 children in nursery schools in Newcastle, the abuse for eight years by Ralph Morris of boys who attended Castle Hill school in Shropshire, to name only a few, have repeatedly illustrated the difficulty children face in being believed when they are hugely damaged by adults.

In spite of that body of evidence the government has announced it is to loosen inspections of boarding schools and local authority homes because, according to Virginia Bottomley, we have gone "too far in stressing the rights of the children at the expense of upholding the responsibilities of parents and professionals in supervising them". What tosh. But more understandable tosh if you focus on the word, "expense".

Individuals are better able to make a profit out of our children when regulation is lax. Is this an illustration of adults fulfilling their moral duty to eliminate the wickedness in children—or an example of the darker side of adult profiteering?

Robert Thompson and Jon Venables may or may not be psychopaths, they may or may not be extreme examples of how children react when their sense of self-worth is totally extinguished by abuse, indifference and cruelty—what is certain, their clear need for help, was witnessed by dozens of adults—and no one made any sustained attempt to intervene. They lived in an environment which, as Professor Elizabeth Newson puts it, was "hospitable to evil acts". In short, what much of the present moral panic has conveniently overlooked, is not just the facts of the impoverishment of children's lives in an increasingly affluent society, but also what is happening to the community not 30 years ago but *now*.

Demonising children because of the sins of the fathers seems the ultimate abuse against the already vulnerable

What has driven some of us to sidestep the requirement that once you become a parent, you should endeavour to put a child's needs first, isn't so much permissiveness as the "morality" of the marketplace and the "values" of the consumer society (crystallised in the confused mother who left her two-year-old at home, because she couldn't afford childcare, but who wanted to work to give them both a decent home.)

"We have two kinds of morality side-by-side," wrote Bertrand Russell in 1928. "One which we preach but do not practise, and another which we practise but seldom preach."

The practising "morality" of Major's Britain cuts deeply across Hugo Gryn's advocacy of "Don't do unto others what is hateful to you". Today's "moral order" offers "mercy" to financier crooks with 108 hours of community service; it pursues policies that keep 13 million in poverty; it decides priorities so that the country can't afford £860 million for childcare, but can spend a couple of billion bailing out the poll tax; it pursues profit to the point where it undermines the very foundation of the family and its philosophy of mutuality. This, said Pope John Paul II in *La Stampa* last month, is "savage capitalism". It produces injustice, exploitation, violence and arrogance—hardly the playground for happy families.

The marketplace brutalises and under-educates. It encourages children to grow up too quickly because as prematurely "sophisticated" consumers, they—or rather their parents—are persuaded to spend more. "I gave him everything he asked for" is often the cry of a parent whose child has "gone wrong". But sometimes all a child needs to "go right" is our time and our involvement.

As individuals we must take greater responsibility for what we do—and what we fail to do—for our children, but government has a role too. It could spend £9 million on the provision of child mental health teams, in-

cluding child psychotherapists—we have 260 teams, over 500 are required. It could announce increased funding for vital projects such as Parents & Co that trains parents to help parents. It runs on a minimal £150,000 a year—and cuts mean fewer staff hours as demand grows.

It could announce the re-opening of teenage drop-in centres and schools with special needs closed as a result of cuts. (Eight out of 26 schools for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties have closed since the demise of ILEA, and more are under threat.)

It could announce a national strategy for the family—a strategy which, at the very least, makes the family visible. Affordable childcare, flexi-time, job share and part-time workers' rights—so that work becomes a part of family life, not the cause of its destruction. It could make the national curriculum more flexible so that personal and social education—the preparation of young people to make decent decisions on a range of far-reaching issues, including parenthood—is given the time and space denied it now.

It could take up Cardinal Basil Hume's suggestion that we need a royal commission on the Family. A commission that would expose our ignorances about what parenting in the 1990s involves—an ignorance that is to be found in all classes.

It might examine how we balance our "right" to have our individual needs met, with the responsibilities that are also required once we are a parent. It might ask how we socialise some girls so that they seek more than pregnancy at 15, and how we socialise some boys so that aggression isn't viewed as the only passage into manhood.

A royal commission might again reveal the lack of resources for mediation and counselling services and for support for stepfamilies, and how scandalously little we invest in childhood as a whole—in education, diet, health, homes. It might also correct the myth that life for all was happier 40 or 50 years ago. In 1913, I could have been imprisoned for life in a mental institution for having my daughter out of wedlock. "It was women far more than men who were the real victims of the sexual taboos of the time," writes Steve Humphries in *A Secret World of Sex*, "there was a high price to pay for the sexual respectability of the past."

Many of us try to live as honourably as we can in a society whose prevailing ethics go against the grain of decency. "When people are afraid, they discover the violence within them," writes William Golding, author of *The Lord of the Flies*, "When they are afraid together, they discover that the violence within them can be almost bottomless." Many of us are afraid. And when we are afraid, it is easier to panic, to hit out at others, particularly the most vulnerable, instead of examining our own values, our own conduct.

In a supermarket recently, a mother slapped a tiny girl around the face. The child had reached for sweets at the till. "Perhaps she's tired?" I said. "What's it to do with you?" the woman replied. "She's my fucking business."

If the market ever dictates that we go back and privatise the family to the extent it once was, then we will have no morality left at all; new or old.

CHARTER 88

Five years ago,
Charter 88 called
for a constitutional
revolution.

Five years ago, there
were 348 of us.
Now, we are
approaching 50,000.

The intervening years
of one party rule,
divided opposition and
centralisation of power
have only served to
highlight the inadequacies
of our system.

Only a renewal of our
democracy can deliver
what is surely our most
fundamental right -
the right to good
government.

Join us. Together, we
can make it happen.

*Charter 88 calls for a Bill of Rights, freedom of
information, a fair electoral system of proportional
representation, a reformed House of Commons, a
democratic Upper House, reform of the judiciary,
redress for all state abuse, independence for local
government, Scottish and Welsh Parliaments,
devolution of power and a written constitution.*

Yes, I'm signing **CHARTER 88**

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

● I'm also making a donation

£10 ☐ £15 ☐ £20 ☐

£25 ☐ £50 ☐ £other

NS30r



Charter 88, which celebrates its fifth birthday this week,
is now one of the most influential pressure groups in
British politics, says **Stuart Weir**

A child of its times

It was an unspectacular birth. A handful
of early signatories—Salman Rushdie,
Geoffrey Robertson QC, Ian McEwan,
Anthony Barnett and myself—formally
handed in our charter as a petition at the
House of Commons and held a press con-
ference at which we comfortably outnumbered
the press. The next day's *Independent*
gently mocked our attempts to Sellotape our
banner into shape.

Five years later, Charter 88 is one of the
most professional and influential pressure
groups in British politics, with nearly 50,000
signatories and an annual budget of about
£750,000. And like another great left adven-
ture before it—the Campaign for Nuclear
Disarmament—it is a child of *New Statesman*
(or as it had recently become, *New Statesman*
& Society).

In 1988, the Establishment celebrated the
Tercentenary of the Glorious Revolution and
the complacent (and contradictory) myth of
the infinitely stable and “flexible” political
regime it created. As editor of *NSS*, I wanted
to dramatise the magazine's argument that the
immune system of the body politic had failed
and our politics were consequently riddled
with anti-democratic and authoritarian
viruses. I also hoped to rebuild the old *New*
Statesman alliance between progressive
politics and the liberal intelligentsia.

And so Charter 88 came about. A small
group of people around the magazine came
together and slowly and painfully drafted,
and re-drafted, a charter that became a con-
scious exercise in “class collaboration”—an
attempt to create a centre-left alliance around

a programme of constitutional reform. Then
came the negotiations with the key figures
who were to be the Charter's founding signa-
tories. Finally, Lord Scarman meticulously
revised a last draft and gave us his approval
and a long-lasting loyalty.

Meanwhile, *NSS* found that it had no money
for this highly unconventional promotional
idea and Trevor Smith, of the Rowntree Re-
form Trust, put up the £5,000 we needed to
place the first *Guardian* ad. We were aiming
for 88 signatories, so we wrote to several
hundred people to be on the safe side. The
response was immediate and dramatic: the
signatures and cheques rolled in. Billy Bragg
phoned from a motorway cafe to say he was
in; Simon Rattle faxed his signature across
the Atlantic. Emma Thompson phoned and I
convinced her that we were respectable; Ed-
ward Bond phoned and I failed to convince
him that we weren't. By now, we had 348
signatories for our advertisement.

We were delighted. Soon we were panick-
ing. We were deluged by tens of thousands of
Guardian, *Independent* and *Observer* read-
ers, all of whom wanted to “sign up” and be
recognised. The experience was something
like striking an oil gusher in your back gar-
den. Our idea had become a movement,
though with no office or organisation of its
own; just a cubicle, metal desk and telephone
on the second floor of *NSS*'s offices.

I became joint chair with Richard (now
Lord) Holme, of the Constitutional Reform
Centre, who had played a critical role in the
negotiations that made the Charter, and we
took the crucial decision to appoint Anthony

Rex Features

Birth day: Stuart Weir (right) at the Commons in 1988 to hand in the charter

Barnett, the principal drafter of the charter, as its first "co-ordinator". That the rest is history, of a provisional kind, is primarily down to his nerve and judgment, as well as to the faith and hard work of many talented people.

Charter 88 is one of a new breed of pressure groups that, like Greenpeace on which it is modelled to a degree, "makes waves" on behalf of a buoyant, and committed, constituency. The Charter's signatories are, if you like, "subscribers" to a cause, rather than members in the old-fashioned way, though every year 12 of them are chosen by lot to sit as a jury on the organisation's ruling Council. The charter regularly reports back to the signatories on its progress and, through their donations and standing orders, they provide most of the funds to keep it going.

The rest has largely come from the Rowntree Reform Trust, which is currently funding an exercise that will make Charter 88 self-sufficient within the next two years.

At the very beginning, Charter 88 was unpopular with Labour Party leaders and their intellectual allies. Bernard Crick was one who signed. Others, like Ben Pimlott, who was seeking to popularise the idea of a "common front of the mind", were put off by demands for electoral reform or a Bill of Rights, or possibly by the idea of associating themselves with a movement that might seem hostile to Labour. Some disliked the Charter's praise for dissenters in eastern and central Europe. Neil Kinnock himself notoriously dismissed us as "wankers and whingers".

In any event, we provoked a torrent of punditry that soon eclipsed the celebration of the glories of parliamentary sovereignty. Some accused us of riding on the "real" courage of the Czechoslovak Charter 77 signatories. They were rebuked by none other than Vaclav Havel, in a letter to *NSS*. But our strongest ally was Mrs Thatcher, who constantly demonstrated the strength and urgency of our argument about the dangers of unrestrained executive power in the UK.

As the absence of "checks and balances" became more apparent, and the pressures of Europe and Scotland intensified, intelligent right-wingers began to voice their own concerns about the weaknesses of Britain's constitution. Ferdinand Mount doubted that it was robust enough to withstand the demands of European Union. A new dialogue opened up. Graham Mather's right-wing European Policy Forum is now one of the more influential constitutional pressure groups, publishing critical analyses from the left, like John Stewart's critique of the "new magistracy".

Perhaps the most significant development, however, has been the conversion of the Labour leadership. At this year's party conference, Neil Kinnock publicly became a signatory—a generous gesture by a former opponent—and Gordon Brown and Tony Blair made powerful reforming speeches at a

Charter meeting. John Smith is privately committed to all but the bitterest pill for Labour traditionalists, electoral reform; but even here he is determined to keep the door open to reformers, through the pledge to hold a referendum.

The Charter has, of course, quite properly avoided the trap of many reforming organisations in that it has resolutely kept itself independent from the Labour Party. But Labour's growing conversion is important not only politically (for Labour will at least still provide the base for any alternative to the Tories), but also in terms of the public debate. For the British media curiously allow the major parties to set the parameters of that debate, and Labour's unsteady progress has already added electoral reform and legally-binding political rights to freedom of information and devolution as significant political issues.

There is still a curious refusal on the left to regard constitutional reform as a "serious" political concern. For some, it is of course a way of justifying an unjustifiable party supremacy; for others, a denial of the role the Liberal Democrats must play in Britain's political future if the tide of confused reaction is to be turned back.

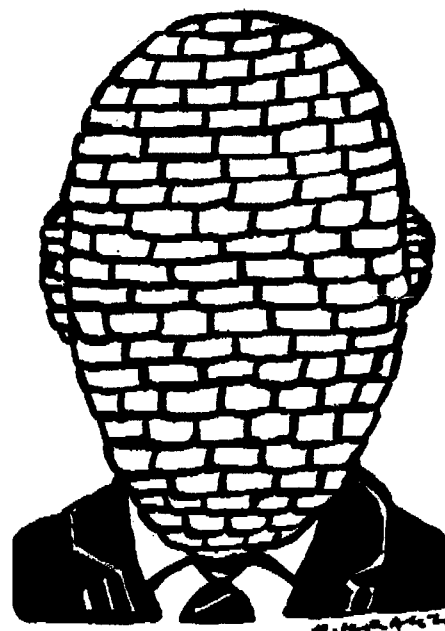
Yet for those with eyes to see, it is the constitutional weaknesses of the political system that permit and underpin the political outrages of the times—from burying the coal industry to approving Thorp, from unaccountable rule by quango locally to rule by deceit in Northern Ireland, from the ban on trade unions at GCHQ to ending the right of silence (already accomplished, incidentally, in Northern Ireland), the common denominator is the one-party hold that the Conservatives have on power at Westminster, on a minority of the vote, and the absence of any restraint upon their use of that power.

"I didn't join the Labour Party to campaign for electoral reform," a so-called Labour intellectual recently declared, "but to end poverty." So did I, but the past 13 years have shown me that single-party government can increase poverty, against the wishes of a majority of the public, as long as it satisfies a

nicely calculated set of priorities of a well-placed electoral minority. In any realistic coalition after elections run on a PR basis, government policies would have to satisfy a wider and more pluralistic set of demands; and parliament would have more meaning.

There is a new mood in British politics, to which the government is imperfectly responding. That's what the Citizen's Charter, more open government, oversight of the SIS is all about. The progressive agenda of political, social and economic rights—including the right to know—and devolving and democratising political power is not merely the only realistic alternative to Conservative misrule. It will be the saving of this country. Here's to the next five years.

Stuart Weir is editor of the Democratic Audit and an executive member of Charter 88



House

(with apologies to Rachel Whiteread)

They filled it up with dogma,
And crammed it full of dole;
Then in they flung
Expensive bung
To stoke the party's soul.

They layered it with jingo,
And poured in pints of flam
(The cost of heat
And cleaning street
And plenty other scam).

They chucked in other rubbish
Like ownership of stocks,
The Royal Mail
And British Rail,
The homeless in a box.

They topped it off with riot
And new selective schools,
An iron fist
And tatty list
Of Back to Basic rules.

They paid a peerless foreman
To peel away the shell:
They'd win the prize
And lick the lies
That they'd created Hell.

They stood about it, beaming,
As brickdust filled the air,
Then, at the last,
They gazed aghast
For there was *nothing there!*

The passers-by inspected
The vacuum on display,
Asked, "What's the score?"
And, "What's it for?"
Then turned and walked away.

Bill Greenwell



Zhores A Medvedev fills in the political backdrop to the Russian elections. With many opposition parties banned, Boris Yeltsin's biggest danger is an electoral boycott

Don't vote, it only encourages them

By the middle of November, when Boris Yeltsin's decree abolished regional, town and other local councils, the only democratically elected politician still in power in Russia was the president. Everyone else in authority—heads of administration, governors, mayors, representatives and sundry other people at various levels—had been appointed by presidential decree. The constitution under which the president had been elected and to which he had sworn loyalty had been ruined. The absence of constitutional organs of power, however, is to be temporary. The country goes to the polls on 12 December to adopt a new constitution and, at the same time, to elect the new two-chamber Federal Assembly.

For the election to be legitimate, a minimum of 25 per cent of the electorate of 107 million people have to vote. This low ceiling was intended to counteract a possible boycott by parties disqualified from standing. The minimum level of participation in the referendum on the constitution, however, was raised to 50 per cent (this had been the turnout required in the April referendum). This might well prove to be a difficult target.

The new constitution severely curtails the rights of the national republics that form part of the Russian Federation. As a result, voters in those republics, together with other groups, particularly war veterans and pensioners who feel some nostalgia for the Soviet Union, are likely to boycott the referendum. The Russian winter will also depress turnout. If less than

50 per cent vote, parliamentary elections will go ahead anyway, but the constitution defining parliament's authority (and which increases the president's power considerably) will remain no more than a draft.

The strategy of economic reform

It seemed, at first, that the transition to a market economy would be quite simple, given that Russia has a reasonably well developed industrial infrastructure, rich natural resources and plentiful sources of energy. What was required, first of all, was to shift a considerable part of the military industrial complex to the production of goods for which there was a commercial demand in domestic and international markets. This task, however, required large amounts of capital to effect the structural reconstruction of the whole industrial base. And the one thing Russia did not have was capital. In fact, all it had was debts, which had risen enormously because Russia had taken over the entire hard currency debt of the former Soviet republics. The credits promised by the west were too small to accomplish the reconstruction.

In reality, there were only three available means of financing market reform: opening up the country to private foreign investment; sharply increasing the export of natural resources; and closing down uncommercial military enterprises and institutions, ignoring the fact that, inevitably, this would create a large army of unemployed. Only a high level of unemployment (up to 10 per cent accord-

ing to the calculations of Yeltsin's western advisers; much more according to others) would bring down the hyper-inflation that was making investment in industry unattractive. The essential prerequisites for structural reconstruction along the lines proposed by the International Monetary Fund were shutting down unprofitable enterprises, freezing incomes and lowering social expenditure.

To its amazement, the government discovered that, having cut subsidies to military factories and unprofitable enterprises, production fell rapidly (by 20 per cent in 1992 and by 16 per cent from January to September 1993). However, factories did not close and unemployment did not grow. Government policies that might have raised the number of unemployed to 15 million by the end of 1993 were opposed both by parliament and the Russian Central Bank, whose chairman, Viktor Gerashchenko, was subordinate to the Supreme Soviet and not to the government. The reform was also hampered by the old constitution, since it gave Russian citizens not just an abstract right to work, but to "guaranteed employment, remunerated in accordance with the quantity and quality of work".

Attempts to stimulate the structural reconstruction of industry by means of auction and voucher privatisation were also fruitless. The ownership of most enterprises was simply transferred to their work collectives. Only the abrogation of the constitution, the dissolution of parliament and Constitutional Court, and the transfer of the Central Bank to full government control could create the necessary conditions for real reform. And since reform could not be a rapid process, it might produce social unrest. In order to avert that, strong power and, even more important, a ruling party to cement that power, was required.

The Constitutional Referendum

The adoption of the new constitution, which was published on 10 November, is more important to Yeltsin than the election of a new parliament since it is the constitution that radically increases presidential power. From an historical point of view, however, the increased power of the president is not the most significant thing, but the elimination of the sovereignty the national republics acquired in

International observers will see Russians at the ballot box, but does it mean democracy?

1990-91 as a result of Yeltsin's policies.

At that stage, Yeltsin found the sovereignty of the republics a useful weapon in his struggle against Gorbachev. After the dissolution of the USSR, however, the sovereignty of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Chechnya and other republics within the Russian Federation, began to hinder the reform process. Moreover, Russian regions rich in resources, food or industrial base (for example, North Caucasus, Eastern Siberia, the Urals), not wishing to share profits equally with the poor central and northwestern regions through the general budget, also began to create autonomous economic zones.

Moscow, a ten-million-strong bureaucratic metropolis, could not survive without collecting tribute from the regions. The draft of the new constitution, therefore, strengthens not only the power of the president but also of the centre generally, turning Russia into a unitary state economically and politically. For this reason the national minorities (16 per cent of Russia's population) might boycott the referendum or even reject the new constitution.

The new constitution changes the right to "guaranteed" work, to the right "to be defended from unemployment". In other words, the state guarantees to pay unemployment benefit. In November, the process began of making miners redundant. So they, too, might reject the constitution.

However, since newspapers and magazines are now too expensive to have more than a restricted, local circulation, radio and television have become the main sources of information and propaganda. As a result, a vast and complex document like the constitution cannot really be widely and objectively discussed. Many Russians scarcely realise that the old constitution no longer exists.

What will the Federal Assembly be like?

The political complexion of the new parliament is not particularly important at present. According to the new constitution, it can be quickly and legally dissolved, and in any case it will only serve for a two-year term. What is more important is the nature of the elections to the State Duma, in which half the 450 seats will be filled on the basis of party lists rather than elections in individual constituencies. Moreover, important government posts can now be combined with membership of parliament (this was a feature of Stalin's Supreme Soviet and, for this reason, was not permitted in the last parliament). Because of this new rule, the Russian government and the presidential apparatus, until October staffed by non-party professionals (in most cases ex-members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [CPSU] who had left the party after the 1991 coup), formed two parties that quickly became ruling parties.

The main party, which formed a "ministerial-administrative" bloc called Russia's Choice, was set up in the middle of October and is led by Yegor Gaidar. Apart from another first deputy prime minister, Vladimir Shumeiko, it includes many other ministers and people from the presidential apparatus.

The second party, Russian Unity and Accord, is led by two deputy prime ministers,

Boris Kagarlitsky warns of media censorship and pre-election dirty tricks creating the illusion of a Russian democracy

Boris will fix it

Whatever happens in the 12 December elections, they will not be free or fair. The rules under which they are to be conducted have been set by Boris Yeltsin's government alone; the relevant election committees have no opposition representatives or input. Constant revisions have been made to the election regulations. The dates in the election timetable were deliberately unrealistic and constantly broken. The parliament elected, convened by the simple decision of the president, will be subject to dissolution at any time by the same prerogative. There are no guarantees that political forces can compete freely; indeed, it has deliberately been made difficult for them to do so, while the president's administration is openly using government resources in the election campaign on the side of the pro-Yeltsin Russia's Choice coalition.

The Central Electoral Commission was appointed by Yeltsin from among turncoat-deputies from the old parliament. Its main concern has been registering approved parties and drawing up the borders of the electoral constituencies. The outcome of its deliberations has resulted in a situation in which there will be an average 590,000 voters per parliamentary seat in the regions that voted against Yeltsin in the April 1993 referendum, compared with only 456,000 in the pro-Yeltsin regions. Countrywide, that means millions of votes for opposition candidates will be wasted. Regulations intended to prevent such inequitable outcomes have simply been ignored by the CEC, and there is no other body to which an appeal can be made.

The previously existing two-round election structure has also been exchanged for the British first-past-the-post system. Given that the minimum turnout of voters required to make the elections valid is 25 per cent, and there may be as many as six candidates in each seat, the winners could easily be elected by as little as 7-8 per cent of the electorate.

The rejection of two-round elections is justified by a lack of funds. The same explana-

tion was given for the refusal to allow any representatives of opposition parties free broadcasting time until 20 November—the last day for collecting the necessary signatures to qualify for the elections. But last week, after opposition parties were given broadcasting opportunities for the first time, Yeltsin warned parties against using broadcasts "to lash out at the constitution and the president". His press spokesman also said, ominously, that law enforcement agencies should "make clear their stance" to "insults" against the "legitimate authorities".

Altogether, the CEC registered 35 political parties or blocs, but only 13 had their lists confirmed. The route to registration was strewn with obstacles, not the least of which was that the CEC, in the best traditions of Russian bureaucracy, required all parties intending to put forward candidates to prove that they had not been banned.

This was far from easy. The Russian justice ministry did publish a list of 91 approved organisations permitted to take part in the elections. It included such strange bodies as the Russian Penitentiary Association, the Association for the Defence of Rights of Fathers and Children, the All-Russian Society of Teetotallers and Good Health and the Association of Deaf Artists of Russia. But it did not include the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the People's Party "Free Russia" or the Labour Party (although the communists were eventually included on the list at the last moment).

This is an election being conducted without proper paving legislation or regulation, and in conditions of TV and press censorship. While overt censorship has eased over recent weeks, the opposition parties remain without access to buildings in which to meet, or television programmes or newspapers to put across their message.

If, all the same, the elections are held, the authorities will call it a triumph of democracy. Many observers from all over the world have already been invited to witness it. But they will see only the people putting their votes in the ballot boxes. Meanwhile, the preparation for the elections, all the decisions influencing their outcome, the formation of local election commissions, (that supervise registration and "equal opportunities"), are all going on now. And, naturally, this is happening unobserved.

Just in case, the CEC has issued a memorandum on the status of international observers, whereby all observers have to be officially registered. If the CEC finds their actions "incompatible with their status", it can take that status away and banish the observer from the country. The same thing can be achieved at the request of other state bodies or state officials. This may be an election, but it is not democracy.

Translated by Rosanna Kelly

The opposition parties remain without meeting places or TV programmes to put their message across

the powerful Sergei Shakhrai and Aleksandr Shokhin. It aims to unite the highest provincial and national republican officials. The two parties quickly formed electoral alliances with other blocs that support the president, and between them, they hope to win at least half the seats in the Federal Assembly.

After the disintegration of the USSR, all the institutions of the socialist bloc disappeared. The huge office of the president and the USSR Supreme Soviet, with its vast apparatus, was swept aside. The Soviet government, the largest in the world, consisting of 80 ministries and state committees, was dismantled. Yet few of these officials were left without work in the new Russia. In fact, Russia's bureaucratic apparatus is 20 per cent larger than that of the Soviet Union.

What was different from the position in the former Soviet Union was that this huge bureaucratic army was not based on the CPSU infrastructure. Now, however, as a result of the establishment of Russia's Choice and Russian Unity and Accord, they have once again joined the main ruling parties.

The rapid union between the Russian bureaucracy and the ruling political parties provoked a split in the government at the end of October. Prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin did not join either of the parties. He also objected to the combination of senior government posts with membership of parliament. The government divided into the "Gaidar party", consisting of people heading the "political" ministries and committees (foreign affairs, press and information, social security, privatisation, finance and so on) and the "Chernomyrdin party", comprising ministers responsible for construction, transport, light industry, energy, military industry, communications and others. The Gaidar group of ministers announced that if they won the election, Gaidar would replace Chernomyrdin as prime minister and Fedorov would replace Gerashchenko as Central Bank chairman.

The split within the government became deeper after a deputy prime minister, Aleksandr Zavoryukha, who runs the agricultural sector, joined the socialist-oriented Agrarian Party, which defends the interests of the collective and state farms.

The appearance of government parties representing those officials who are already ruling the country made many of the pro-market, pro-democracy centrist parties move over to the opposition, to share the fate of the socialist and communist groups. As a result, the Central Electoral Commission set up by the president used all the means at its disposal to reduce the number of parties and blocs permitted to put forward lists of candidates for election. Of the 35 parties and blocs that began the electoral campaign on 20 October when the final electoral rules became clear, only 13 were allowed to confirm their lists.

The disqualification of many parties, often on technical grounds, has undoubtedly reduced the opposition's chances. At the same time, however, it has increased the number of people who might boycott the election. That, rather than a shift to the parties of the right or the left, is what is likely to determine whether Yeltsin gets his desired mandate.

Zhores Medvedev is a biologist, political commentator and author



Ronnie Kasrils, former intelligence head of the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto weSiswe, tells **Gareth Smyth** the struggle for change in South Africa is far from over

Calling the shots

In the flesh, the bogeyman of the white South African establishment has the affability of a favourite uncle. With brown hair greying slightly at the temples, he wears an open-necked shirt, has a bear-like hand-shake, and smiles broadly. Ronnie Kasrils, former intelligence head of the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto weSiswe (MK), is in Britain for the launch of his new book. He is touted by his publishers as "the driving force behind the ANC's most violent campaigns", his name "linked to the KGB and the Soviet bloc". The tag "armed and dangerous" came from the South African police.

Growing up Jewish in Johannesburg in the second world war shaped Kasrils' view of apartheid. As a little boy, he asked his mother if the suffering of black people around him was like the suffering of Jews in Europe. "I remember her thinking, and then agreeing. My neighbours asked the same question, but their mothers said, 'No, don't worry, they're not the same, the schwarzes are used to it'. Most whites have lived a lie which starts young when they imbibe the poison of adults. I stayed concerned because my mum said I was right."

Kasrils antipathy towards apartheid came out in his years at school. As he worked in cosmopolitan, racially mixed circles in Durban in the late 1950s, he was attracted to the ANC and the Communist Party. Following the Sharpeville massacre, his talent for organising led him to early acts of sabotage with stolen dynamite. By 1963, he fled South Af-

rica, to return only in 1990.

His partnership with his Scottish-born wife Eleanor, whom he met in Durban, endured the strains of exile. After marriage in Tanzania, they faced long separations as Ronnie trained in the Soviet Union and East Germany, and organised MK operations from Angola, Mozambique and Swaziland.

Kasrils is proud of their two sons, born in London where he and Eleanor spent most of the late 1960s and '70s. She stayed when he returned full-time to Angola in 1978. His sons were 12 and ten at the time; he shows relief that his neglect did not cause lasting damage. "It was Eleanor's commitment to the cause we served, and the support she provided as the main breadwinner of the family, that made my departure possible," he says.

For Kasrils, the mid-1970s were the turning-point in South Africa. "The Soweto uprising showed that the new generation, reared under Bantu education, were full of fighting spirit. It was a key signal that apartheid couldn't survive." But as the South African regime resorted to more desperate tactics, including the 1981 commando raid on Maputo, ANC and MK sustained heavier losses.

Was the ANC sufficiently ruthless in its response? In his book Kasrils recounts an incident in Swaziland where MK hesitated in dealing with a South African hit-squad who then escaped, probably to kill other ANC cadres. He admits a particular mistake but not an error in approach. "Our struggle was eminently decent, about positive human values,



Kasrils and Archbishop Desmond Tutu (left) at the site of the shooting, the day after the Bisho march massacre

that kind of normality, I'll want to be part of the show."

Is that why he led the ANC's march into the Ciskei bantustan? "That's what people think," Kasrils laughs. His thirst for struggle is far from quenched.

Between 1980 and 1983, Kasrils organised operations into South Africa from Mozambique. The apartheid regime hit back.

"The route home from Mozambique was through the tiny, landlocked kingdom of Swaziland. It took over an hour to travel the 80 kilometres over a poorly maintained road, through a couple of checkpoints, to the Swazi border. Cadres moving between the two countries would jump the well-patrolled border fence by a number of routes.

"We made our plans in Maputo, while Swaziland served as the forward base for our operational units. While MK's operations never rose to full-scale guerrilla warfare, these nonetheless succeeded in inspiring resistance in a way not seen in other countries.

"Our military operations included rocket attacks on police stations, sabotage operations against power plants, and the blasting of strategic oil installations at the SASOL complex. The morale of the black population rose dramatically. P W Botha's government, under strong police and military influence, became obsessed with retaliatory action.

"During the night of 30 January 1981, Pretoria's commandoes (Portuguese and Rhodesian mercenaries among them), struck at the suburb of Matola on the outskirts of Maputo. We had several residences there, and three were pointed out by informers.

"Dressed in Mozambican army uniforms and speaking Portuguese, a group of raiders engaged (MK commander) Obadi and others in conversation at the front door of one house. Weapons were suddenly pointed, and the occupants ordered out of the house and lined up against a garden wall. The enemy opened fire and several comrades died on the spot. Obadi staggered away with his guts ripped open. An MK comrade, posted in the loft of the house, opened fire and hit several of the attackers. The enemy evacuated with several wounded, leaving a radio operator with a bullet hole through his head and a swastika symbol painted on his helmet. The words "Apocalypse Now!" adorned his combat jacket.

"In all ten comrades died. Obadi, whose real name was Moses Mokabudi, died in hospital one week later."

Kasrils returned to South Africa in 1990, spending a year as a wanted man before an amnesty. In 1992, he led the ANC march to the "homeland" of Ciskei.

"One moment I was running, my comrades with me. The next instance, without warning, the soldiers opened fire. I instinctively dropped to the ground. We were in an open field, without weapons or cover."

"As the first fusillade died down, Bushy, my bodyguard, cried that he had been hit. As I began to crawl towards him, the gunfire broke out again and I froze where I lay. The sinister whirr of projectiles overhead, followed by

four dull thuds, made me realise with horror that they were firing grenades.

"It was 7 September 1992, and I was at the head of a huge march trying to gain access to the small town of Bisho, the capital of Ciskei. A parched enclave in the eastern Cape, this "homeland" had been set up by Pretoria, was funded by Pretoria, and its troops were trained and armed by Pretoria. It was ruled by an aspirant strong-man, Brigadier Gqozo, who had seized power in a military coup.

"The ANC and its allies had decided on a peaceful march to Bisho, where we would hold a people's assembly and demand political rights in the territory. More than 80,000 people had marched for an hour in blazing heat, up a hill to reach the nominal border.

"Half an hour before the shooting broke out, the leadership of the march despatched me to check the situation ahead. With a few companions I had motored up the hill. The border was nominally marked by a simple signpost, "Ciskei border". That day, coils of razor-wire had been strung out along the border and across the road, preventing passage further north. Behind the wire was a blockade of South African armoured vehicles, and behind them a contingent of Ciskei police; 300 metres behind the police were lines of Ciskei soldiers by a radio station. South African and Ciskei military helicopters buzzed overhead.

"The decision to march into Bisho itself had been publicly endorsed by the national leadership. Driving back down the hill gave a magnificent view of the march. It was a dense mass of humanity, people of all ages and types, from urban townships and rural villages, the majority dressed in sneakers and colourful but tattered T-shirts. There were regional language differences. But the hopes, the humour, the demands were common. People wanted an end to poverty and suffering, basic human rights and freedom.

"As the second fusillade died down Bushy cried for help again. Those of us still out in the field lay still, faces down, not daring to move. I began crawling to him, at first tentatively, as a few last rounds of gunfire echoed across the field. It was a hard-nosed bullet that had hit him, leaving a gaping hole in his stomach. I commandeered a car. Bushy was losing blood fast and would only survive if he was swiftly transported to hospital. Bushy's name was Petros Vantyu, and he was 29.

"I turned to assist the wounded. A young woman was writhing in pain, her legs shattered by bullets. I gave her water which she drank ferociously. The crowd had been mercilessly raked. Twenty-eight died. More than 200 were wounded.

"I visited the injured in hospital. Bushy was recovering and, like the others, was in fighting spirit. The woman I had given water was on traction, her entire leg in plaster. I wanted to remain with her and the others, but my bodyguards were motioning that we had to leave. She murmured words I could hardly hear: "Qabane (comrade), don't worry, we're going to make those killers pay. We will still liberate Bisho, and the whole country."

"I realised that it was me, not her, who needed reassuring."

The extracts on this page are from "My Undercover Struggle against Apartheid" by Ronnie Kasrils, Heinemann, £6.99

against clear-cut evil. There were individuals who deserved to be dealt with, and we would have saved lives in the process. But the struggle's got to come to an end. If you have been too ruthless it makes it difficult to get the change of spirit that's required to overcome the past."

Hence the agreement with the Nationalists to accept a five-year transition to majority rule. But Kasrils is firm that, whatever short-term damage can be inflicted by the "Freedom Alliance" of "homeland" leaders and right-wing whites, the "big battle for the future" in South Africa remains between the ANC and the Nationalists—"the one force representing the dispossessed as against the party of privilege."

The ending of apartheid, Kasrils concedes, has not been the decisive victory he once envisaged. The regime dragged out negotiations after the unbanning of the ANC and Nelson Mandela's release in 1990 in order to "destabilise the black population and weaken the ANC", he says. "In May 1992 the regime decided not to come to an agreement basically similar to the one now reached."

One-person one-vote is not the end of the story, though. "The task for the ANC is the redistribution of the wealth of the country to uplift the majority, (so) redressing centuries of wrongs."

In the short-term, Kasrils heads the ANC's preparation for the election set for 27 April. In the longer term he can't see himself becoming part of a new establishment.

"It's a bit difficult to say what I'll do. Some colleagues are talking about me donning a uniform. I'm not the kind of person who sits behind a desk, I prefer being out and about." Kasrils has been less than comfortable sitting round the table with officers of the South African Defence Forces. "'Look', they say, 'the politicians take the decisions, we are professional soldiers'. They sing it like a chorus."

"I'm not so at ease with officialdom, suddenly becoming part of government, a life in committees. I don't know that, if once there's

Is Kenneth Clarke really so clever? **Paul Anderson** examines the tax-and-cut budget and assesses its likely impact on Britain's economic prospects

Clarke's conjuring trick



Andrzej Krauze

It is easy to see why Kenneth Clarke's Tory colleagues and the markets hailed him as a magician after he delivered Britain's first unified budget on Tuesday.

Somehow or other, Clarke managed to produce a package of measures to attack the public sector borrowing requirement, raising taxes and cutting public spending—and yet he did it apparently without either hitting the most sensitive parts of the welfare state or increasing the most noticeable taxes.

On tax, Clarke confirmed the imposition of VAT on fuel, announced by Norman Lamont in March, and cut the tax relief on mortgage interest payments even more than Lamont planned (which will bring in an extra £1 billion a year by 1996-97). He put up duties on petrol and cigarettes (worth a total of £2.4 billion a year by 1996-97), promised to raise another £2 billion over three years by clamping down on loopholes (just as shadow chancellor Gordon Brown had been suggesting) and introduced new taxes on air travel and on insurance policies (worth another £1 billion a year from 1995-96). And he brought in changes in income tax that will yield just under £2 billion in 1996-97.

But the Chancellor softened the blow of VAT on fuel by announcing a compensation package for pensioners and others on benefits—an inadequate one, perhaps, as the poverty lobby and environmentalists were quick to point out, but enough to take at least some of the sting out of criticism of Lamont's original plan.

In similar vein, the reduction in tax relief on mortgage interest (very much in line with Labour thinking, as it happens) will cause little pain at a time when interest rates are as low as they are today; while the increased petrol and tobacco taxes (also very much part of Labour's approach to taxation) can be justified on green and health grounds respectively. Clarke's new taxes on air travel and insurance are very cleverly levied on items of once-a-year consumer expenditure (who can remember what last year's holiday cost?).

More important, the income tax hike was done not by increasing rates but by freezing allowances and thresholds, allowing inflation to increase the revenue, a trick learned from Lamont. And, most important of all, Clarke did not extend the base of VAT as almost everyone had expected. Much as the opposition parties fulminate about Clarke's swingeing tax increases, there is widespread recognition among their members that it could have been an awful lot worse—and that many of Clarke's proposals are very similar to the ones that they would have had to put forward if they were in government.

The story is much the same with the budget's spending cuts. The cuts are there all right: in real terms, the "control total" of non-cyclical government spending is set to fall by more than 1 per cent from 1993-94 to 1994-95, with next year's levels reached again only in 1996-97.

Public-sector pay is to be frozen, and there will be major cuts in social security entitlements as, first, sickness and invalidity benefits are merged into a new incapacity benefit, and then income support and unemployment benefit become job seekers' allowance. Defence spending will be cut by more

than 10 per cent in real terms by 1996-97, taking it to below 3 per cent of gross domestic product for the first time since 1945; there will be a further move away from student grants to loans; transport spending will be slashed.

But once again the pain is not quite what was expected. The biggest cut is in the contingency reserve—down £4 billion on previous projections in the next financial year and only a little less in 1994-95 and 1995-96. In real terms, local authority and health spending are shown unchanged—and education gets a 5 per cent increase, while the social security budget increases by 2 per cent. Pensions, unemployment benefit, income support and child benefit will continue to be inflation-proofed. Clarke even found the cash to introduce a childcare allowance for low-paid working single mothers and to bring in a high-interest savings bond for pensioners.

The upshot is that most of the public spending element of the budget will almost certainly prove difficult for the opposition to attack with conviction. Apart from what appear to be draconian changes in invalidity and unemployment benefits—on which much detail is still missing—there is little for Clarke's opponents to get their teeth into. No one outside the military and the Tory right really believes that defence spending should not be slashed, and Clarke has easy populist arguments for public-sector efficiency to answer the unions' howls of protest on public-sector pay. On student loans, his point during the budget speech that bus-drivers should not be made to subsidise the education of future lawyers is a taste of things to come. Already, the main refrain of opposition politicians on the spending plans is that more should have been ploughed into education and training and infrastructural projects—hardly the stuff to set the voters' pulses racing.

Enough, though, of the political cunning of the budget: will it actually work? Clarke said that its purpose was to put public finances in order once and for all, and the key projection in the Red Book that outlines the effects of the budget is the one showing public-sector borrowing steadily falling to zero by 1997-98 (conveniently enough allowing Britain to meet the convergence criteria on public borrowing laid down in the sections of the Maastricht treaty on European monetary union).

The credibility of this PSBR projection depends on what happens to growth: tax revenue will be inadequate to cut into PSBR if growth is low, while social security spending will be difficult to keep under control. The assumption behind Clarke's figures is that the British economy achieves a sustained growth rate of 3.5 per cent from 1995 until the end of the century. But such growth rates are, to say the least, highly unlikely, not least because Europe, Britain's largest export market, is deep in recession and unlikely to revive for a couple of years. With more realistic assumptions of growth at 2.5 per cent, as the Red Book itself admits, the possibilities of reducing the PSBR to zero fade away.

"What the Chancellor needed in this budget was to convince the markets that he had a credible path towards the reduction of the PSBR to zero," says Meghnad Desai, professor of economics at the London School of

Economics and a former member of the Labour front bench Treasury team in the House of Lords. "He has done it quite cleverly. He has disguised the tax increases needed to get the PSBR down, he has made optimistic projections on growth, and he has looted the reserves to balance the books. Clarke has hidden the problems that will come to the fore, he hopes, only after the next election. Watch out for a rush to the polls in 1995 or early 1996!"

Nevertheless, to judge from the reaction of the markets, the scam seems to have worked in the short term at least. The consensus is now that the way is open for the further reductions in interest rates necessary for recovery.

Whether they will be enough on their own is, however, a moot point among left economists. On one hand, there is the traditional Keynesian argument that the problem with the budget is that its mix of spending cuts and tax increases will dampen the overall level of demand in the economy to such an extent that the recovery will inevitably be stillborn.

According to Bryan Gould, writing in *New Statesman and Society* last week, the PSBR is simply the product of the recession and no particular cause for concern. In similar vein, Jonathan Michie, a fellow of Robinson College, Cambridge, and the author of several books arguing for a revival of a version of the Alternative Economic Strategy that formed the basis for Labour policy in the 1970s and early 1980s, says: "Cutting expenditure and increasing taxes is the opposite of what is needed to bring the country out of recession. The major worry now is what happens if it does all go wrong. If it does, the running down of the contingency reserves means that the cuts will be even more savage than those already announced."

On the other hand, there is widespread support for the idea that the central focus of the government's economic policy efforts should be a programme for European recovery—which was not mentioned by Clarke in his speech. Stuart Holland, one of the architects of the AES in the 1970s who has recently been advising Jacques Delors on his European recovery programme, argues that Clarke simply missed the point.

"No national recovery is feasible if Europe stays in recession," he says. "In today's internationalised economy, macro-economic policy has to be internationalised. For us, that means that macro-policy has to be European. The only way out is to increase the macro-economic instruments of the European Union, such as the European Investment Fund. The political space is opening up in Europe for European macro-economic policy instruments."

The government's hope is that exports to the US and to booming economies in the developing world—China, Indonesia, the Phillipines, Mexico—will more than compensate for the sluggishness of the European economy until such time as lower German interest rates have laid the basis for European recovery without recourse to an expensive full-blown European recovery programme. It is a big gamble—but it might, just might, come off. If it does, Clarke can look forward to a move into Number Ten Downing Street before the end of the century.

NEW STATESMAN & SOCIETY

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With right on his side

There have been two budgets this year, delivered by two Chancellors, facing two very different political futures. Poor old Norman Lamont spent Tuesday in the ITN studios, like a sporting has-been at the cup final, while Kenneth Clarke played prime-minister-in-waiting at the dispatch box.

Lamont's resignation speech in June was shot through with envy of his successor. How he burned at the thought that the new Chancellor was coming to the Treasury at "a most favourable time", after "much of the hard work [had] been done". By his standards, Clarke has had a relatively easy ride, free of the recession, the poll tax and the European exchange rate mechanism.

To add to Lamont's sense of injury, Clarke admitted straight off in his budget speech that the recovery, fragile though it is, started in the first half of 1992, before Black Wednesday. Thanks to both Chancellors, however, it is not a recovery that the rest of us are going to enjoy. We may have had two budgets, but we have yet to feel their bite.

This is what makes the reaction to Clarke's budget so unreliable. His speech was judged in a curious vacuum, where what mattered most was his confident performance.

Clarke was breezy, casual even. He scoffed about how economic forecasting was an "unreliable art", but that did not stop him removing millions of pounds at a stroke off the PSBR (in suspicious circumstances). He awarded himself all the credit for last week's 0.5 per cent cut in interest rates, while boasting simultaneously of the new powers he had passed on to the Bank of England. And he rammed the European *Union* down the throat of anti-federalists, when the Prime Minister himself has not yet dared to use the word.

He was the pensioners' friend; the single mothers' friend; and the scourge of the motorist, an unusual turnaround for a Tory politician. The backbench protests against VAT on fuel collapsed immediately upon news of the help for elderly and disabled people on benefits. "It's over," rebel leaders declared joyously in the lobby.

His own side was intoxicated by his air of assurance. "You can't not like him. He's an amiable politician," said one of his critics, a Euro-sceptic, "but he has an agenda which bothers us."

It was Clarke's Europhilia that this particular backbencher was still chewing over (otherwise he would be championing him for prime minister tomorrow). For defenders of the welfare state, however, this budget concealed another agenda. First, comes the small downpayment; later, the increasingly crippling charges.

Lamont's March budget was fairly straightforward. The aim, then as now, was to reduce public borrowing without throwing the recovery off course. To that end, he proposed a series of staggered tax increases, deferring the pain until April this year and beyond. However noxious the imposition of VAT on fuel, the exercise was simply designed to claw back money for the Treasury in the medium term.

Clarke's budget goes further. With a swagger, he announced that it "must sort out the problem of public borrowing once and for all" (Lord Lawson, looking down from the peer's gallery, may have laughed hollowly). This week, he got the easy bits out of the way—with more to follow later.

The hike in petrol charges, the air travel taxes: the higher insurance premiums and the freezes in personal allowances are not a problem. People will feel them and complain, without a doubt. But they could well have been measures introduced by a Labour government. The same goes for the reduction to 15 per cent in the rate of tax relief for married couples and mortgage payers in 1995-96.

The most important passage in Clarke's budget was dealt with in a few minutes. "For the next three years," he declared, "total public expenditure will grow by substantially less than the projected growth in the economy." The Tory right was cock-a-hoop about his promise to reduce public spending as a proportion of national income from 45 per cent this year to 42.5 per cent in 1996-97 (although they do not want the process to stop there—"anything over 40 per cent," said one, "is nothing short of socialism").

A few indirect taxes, here and there, are not going to make much difference. The real squeeze will be on public-sector pay and social-security spending. Part one of the clamp-down on social security will begin in April 1995, with the switch from invalidity to

incapacity benefit—and tougher accompanying medical tests. Part two will come into operation in April 1996, when, at the stroke of a pen, the unemployed will be turned into job-seekers, and their benefit entitlement reduced from 12 to six months. If people cannot find a job, the government reasons, they are not trying hard enough.

Part three lies in the hands of the axemen of the No Turning Back group, Michael Portillo and Peter Lilley. As the recent leak from the Department of Social Security shows, reductions in child benefit and opt-outs from the state pension and unemployment benefit are under consideration.

So this budget—and not Lamont's—marks the official start of the attack on the welfare state, for all Clarke's claims that he will never dismantle it. If he serious about bringing public borrowing down to zero by the end of the decade—and we know the Tories are determined never to raise income taxes—then his hands are tied.

In an interesting paper for the Social Market Foundation, Bill Robinson (a former special adviser to Lamont) argues that much of the revenue lost since the mid-1980s as a result of cuts in income tax can no longer be made good by old faithfuls such as increased oil revenues or privatisation receipts. "The government's misfortune is that the revenue from 'invisible' taxes with a low political profile . . . as well as lost non-tax revenue have now to be replaced with much more visible (and therefore unpopular) tax increases" (*Britain's Borrowing Problem*, SMF, £5).

The foretaste of that is VAT on fuel; while taxes to come include motorway charges. More unpopular measures like these can only be avoided by reducing public spending. In a cocky reference to the jobs he has held, Clarke said it would be "unacceptable" to contemplate cuts in resources for health, education and law and order. By exempting these, he is making it doubly certain the burden will fall on the social security budget.

It is to John Smith's credit that he saw through Clarke's verbiage straightaway. The Labour side looked uncomfortable during the Chancellor's speech, in part because some of the measures (such as helping lone parents, or reducing mortgage tax relief, were ones they

would have liked to introduce themselves). His air of bonhomie, whisky glass at his side, was also disarming. But Smith went straight to the point: there would be more taxes today, and more taxes tomorrow; more cuts today, and more tomorrow; and the sick and the unemployed were going to be the first to pay.

If Norman Lamont will be remembered for the recession and devaluation; Kenneth Clarke will be remembered for beginning to unpick the welfare state. A fine reputation for the pair of them.

This budget —and not Lamont's—marks the official start of the attack on the welfare state

Janet Anderson is a charming and able MP who suffers from guilt by association. Until recruited for the task of depriving Peter Hain of his platform as Secretary of the Tribune Group, she was PPS to the deputy leader, Margaret Beckett. Beckett has never erased the stigma of having "betrayed" the left when she accepted the post of under secretary for education, after Joan Lester had resigned in 1976 in protest against education cuts. This "betrayal" was thrown in Beckett's face when, as a born-again Bennite, she lashed out in 1981 at Neil Kinnock and others who had abstained, rather than vote for Tony Benn as deputy leader.

Anderson is also tainted by the suspicion of having served as the instrument of the pro-Brussels "modernisers", particularly Peter Mandelson and Gordon Brown. The Labour leadership shows no enthusiasm for having their softly-softly no-commitment strategy subjected to the sort of rigorous criticism levelled by Peter Hain and his collaborator, Roger Berry. They have proposed a £10-billion kickstart to the economy, instead of overblown talk of closing tax loopholes. Until recently, the leadership relied on clobbering such dangerous Keynesians in the near-privacy of the PLP, by frogmarching the front bench into voting them down. There was nothing so crude as the threats of removing the whip once meted out to the Bevanites.

The leadership backed Janet Anderson with Machiavellian cunning. Women's votes would be attracted because of her work since 1989 on the steering committees of the Labour Women's Network and for Women Against Pit Closures. They knew she could not be rejected as a right-winger because of her activities in CND and LCC and her 13 years with Barbara Castle and Jack Straw.

They could still count on her instinctive loyalism. She is the daughter of a life-long Labour agent, the late Tom Anderson. From him and her work as PLP campaign officer, she learned enough to enable her to win Rossendale with the paper-thin majority of 120 votes by doing a last-minute mailing to selected voters. She was able to take the seat from the popular local Tory minister, David Trippier, when so many other marginals slipped away from less-alert people in those crumbly last days.

Anderson's popularity with the Labour establishment for ousting Hain may have been dented for some in Monday's Sunday trading debate by her competing loyalty—to the Shopping Hours Reform Council, financed by the big stores wanting a substantially deregulated Sunday. Although she stopped working for the shopping council when she became an MP, she has remained true to their outlook, signing amendments put down by Dame Angela Rumbold who was the Conservative minister responsible for Sunday trading reforms. This is not the sort of split loyalty that can be appreciated by Ray Powell, the Labour whip, and Usdaw crusader for a Sunday on which all big stores are shut, even those employing members of his union.

Andrew Roth



The admirably crisp Betty Boothroyd dealt with the bared teeth of Ian Paisley in the only way possible

In one sense Sir Patrick Mayhew is unfortunate. His heavy, though pleasant manner, close to that of a stage barrister, has a double-breasted quality. If you want to be a promiscuous derider of ministers, you will of course abuse him and will expect him to be lying.

Which is a pity, because Sir Patrick isn't lying. A line in the correspondence released yesterday has Sinn Féin asking the government if it will engage in a dialogue. And a dialogue is less than negotiation! To any rational person listening to Sir Patrick, to his words not the double-breasted manner, there has been no lying. British secrecy there has been, certain heavy and iterated attitudes about "the men of violence" and, of course, the nice linguistics of diplomacy.

But Sir Patrick did not survive easily on Monday with his own tetchy party because of reflexive Tory loyalty—the place bristles with crypto-Unionists. He survived because prelude messages are *not* negotiations. They may be called talks about talks, a mutual trawling of attitudes, or a search for ground upon which negotiations *might* take place. Everything done took place subjunctively—with a view to what would, should or might happen.

There is an affinity here with the general discourse of the Irish government, which seems to have invented a new tense, the future aspirational. Nobody speaks that language better than Kevin McNamara, who from Labour's front bench did two things—avoid pitching into the government—dead right on the now abundant evidence—and slip in a nostalgic reference to the "Irish dimension". That is a phrase that the more tediously long-memory of us recall from Mr Whitelaw's exertions and from talk around the Anglo-Irish agreement. No doubt we shall hear it again, though the baying noise from the Tory penumbra around the DUP members—Mr Cash, Mr Lamont, Sir Teddy Taylor and other cosmopolitan characters haunt that Alsatia—suggests that patriotic teeth will bare again before this wise exercise is completed.

No one bares teeth quite so professionally as Mr Paisley. The man who has instructed a generation on the high points of 17th-century confessional hatred, took a high moral tone.

There is a school of thought that says that Miss Boothroyd should have ignored his charge of "falsehoods" aimed at Sir Patrick, and affected that deafness so useful to the wise conduct of the Commons. It simply isn't realistic. The words were used very plainly, were certain to go into Hansard and could have been quoted, *would* have been quoted, by the next bombastineer trying to loudmouth his way through the rules.

Miss Boothroyd, who is doing the job ever more wisely, was admirably crisp. She gave Paisley his chance to mend his manners, held it out a second time and then asked for withdrawal. The doctor sat slumped like a sack full of malediction, demanding the full-dress taradiddle of a vote for suspension, that further time might be wasted about him and that

not a headline in the Northern Irish newspapers should be lost.

But if Paisley represents the lumpen element in Ulster Protestant society, James Molyneux with whom the Prime Minister rightly confers, is no sweeter. After Mr McNamara's harmless little flight about an Irish dimension, Moly-

neaux rose in his seat and observed in the tight-mouthed, everlastingly poisonous Unionist way, that if Gerry Adams needed a spokesman in the House of Commons, he needed to look no further than the Labour front bench.

The remark, if made outside the Commons, is actionable. As Sinn Féin think murdering people a proper means to the enforcement of Irish unification, Mr McNamara is being called a ready spokesman for serial killers. That is an immeasurably worse charge than lying, but so much is Commons protocol wrapped up with notions of veracity and sobriety that "accessory to murder" passes gaily by. A festival of toxic negation followed from those benches; it always will.

The happy fact of Monday is the assurance that preludial contact goes on. Though one looks at the official Unionists and that knot of right-wingers sitting near Paisley and wonders what greater rages we still have to witness when negotiations start.

Edward Pearce has just published "*Machiavelli's Children*", Gollancz, £18.99

**Paisley sat slumped
like a sack full of
malediction, demanding
the full-dress taradiddle
of a vote for suspension**

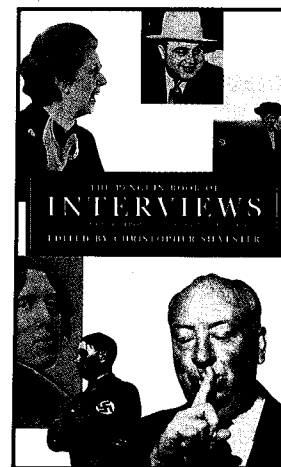
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In the first issue of the new current affairs magazine, the *New Reporter* (£1 from 32 New End Square, London NW3 1LS), the Guardian's Moscow correspondent, Jonathan Steele, writes of meeting a friend who was one of the MPs who stayed in the Russian parliament building until tank shells forced them out. In common with other MPs, he and his family had just been given three days notice to leave their flat, as punishment for sticking by the parliament for ten days after Yeltsin decreed to dissolve it. The MPs have been told that they may receive some modest financial compensation—provided that they can provide satisfactory answers to a questionnaire.

The questions tell their own story: "Did you vote to nominate Alexander Rutskoi as acting president?" "Was your participation in the last parliament voluntary or were you under pressure?" "What prevented you from applying for compensation before 3 October (when the parliament building was stormed)?"

In other words, presidential largesse is to be dispensed on the basis of political allegiance. As Yuri Sergeyev, an administrative worker attached to the Russian parliament, writes from Moscow, "When the old Soviet parliament stopped meeting, I kept my job and flat because I supported the legally elected president and the [Russian] parliament at the White House against the illegal conspirators during the 1991 coup. Today I am to lose my job and flat because I supported the same legally constituted parliament against Yeltsin's illegal decrees. We have no democracy here, only diktat."

Stephen Beck, of Bath, makes a salutary comparison. "On a dull November evening the last scene of the French Revolution was enacted in the orangery and park of St Cloud. Thither on the false pretext of a Jacobin conspiracy the Councils had been transferred, there they were encompassed by armed men, and thence in the gathering gloom they were ignominiously dispersed at the point of the sword. The critical moment in a day of hazards

and uncertainties was when Lucien Bonaparte, the young president of the Five Hundred, left the Assembly, and, on the fictitious plea that daggers had been raised against his brother, called upon the troops, who were mustered on the terrace, in the name of the law to clear the hall. Paris was unmoved by the imposture and violence incidental to the destruction of parliamentary liberty. No tears fell over the Directory and the Councils. They had talked wildly and governed ill. All through France the coup d'état of Brumaire was acclaimed as the dawn of a new era. A few weeks later, the country by a vast preponderance of votes accepted a new constitution, which gave to Napoleon . . . plenary authority over its destinies for the next ten years."

The quote is from H A L Fisher's classic account of the 18th Brumaire, 1799. "Yeltsin repeating history as Bonapartism rather than farce?" asks Beck. Perhaps, but with one difference. As Zhores Medvedev and Boris Kagarlitsky report this week (page 18), there is unlikely to be such a "vast preponderance of votes" for Yeltsin as there was for Bonaparte.

Jonathan Steele's *New Reporter* piece, incidentally, contains an ironical twist. In the flat next door to his friend's lives another acquaintance—a woman with three children, married to a former MP in the old Soviet parliament. This family was also threatened with eviction when the Soviet parliament stopped meeting—to make way for MPs from the Russian parliament. But, along with other ex-Soviet MPs, they fought the evictions through a series of innumerable court hearings, none of which managed to reach a final decision. The most recent hearing took place two days after Yeltsin's attack on the Russian parliament. Since the plaintiff, the Russian parliament, no longer existed, the case against the family was closed. "We all laughed when she told us," says Steele. "Suddenly we saw that the storming of the White House had its good points too."

Steve Platt

Character assassination

I found Alexander Cockburn's article on the Kennedy assassination ("Propaganda of the deed", 19 November) one of the most incredible I have ever read, both for its shameful depiction of Kennedy as a president and for the picture it paints of Lee Harvey Oswald as a man "motivated to kill by honest left-wing principles". Seeing as much of the article concerns President Fidel Castro and Cuba, perhaps a few inaccuracies by Cockburn concerning this subject should be noted.

First, for a man who shows great distrust of the CIA in most of his writing, Cockburn is often keen to indiscriminately report the views of its members when it suits him. Thus the article quotes "William Taplin, a CIA career operations officer", implicating Robert and President Kennedy in the plots to kill Castro, without questioning whether this assertion is, in fact, correct. The evidence against it is indeed plentiful, as Robert Gordon's new book *The Killing of a President* makes clear: "When Mr Kennedy discovered that CIA top brass had ignored his direct orders to stop all plots against Castro, he sent in the FBI and local law enforcement agencies to break up the Agency's training camps on Florida's No Name Key and on Lake Pontchartrain in New Orleans."

Second, in his haste to attack Kennedy, Cockburn also seems to have rather a benevolent attitude towards President Johnson, approvingly noting that he closed down Kennedy's "secret war" against Castro. Unfortunately, this view is not shared by Castro himself. On the day of the assassination, he was meeting French journalist John Daniel, who had been told by William Atwood (an aide to the US ambassador to the UN), with the approval and knowledge of Kennedy, "unofficially" to put out feelers to Castro. Castro's reaction to Kennedy's death and Johnson's arrival in the White House was simple: "This is bad news. *Voilà* this is the end of your mission of peace." Castro later told the House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations that he believed Kennedy to be "sincere" in his desire for peace with Cuba, and had "come to learn much".

The point where Cockburn's story really falls flat, though, is in his assertion that Oswald killed Kennedy for "honest left-wing principles". There is now a plethora of evidence to suggest that Oswald was not the killer, and that after the assassination a massive cover-up occurred. More than this, however, a few doubts should be raised about Cockburn's Oswald. Why was Oswald, a member of the US military, able to defect to the Soviet Union and there condemn the US, only to be allowed to return to the US without so much as a debriefing, let alone being charged with treason, the normal procedure in such circumstances? Why did the Oswald-founded local branch of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (a pro-Castro group) operate out of the same office as Guy Bannister, an extreme right-winger who headed a detective agency that secretly aided anti-Castro guerrillas?

However, even if we do accept that Oswald did kill Kennedy for the reasons Cockburn puts (which most of the evidence suggests is completely untrue), I find the whole tenor of his implicit approval of such an act totally unacceptable. Can the brutal murder of President John F Kennedy really be exonerated by the motivation of "honest left-wing principles"?

Robert Philpot
Durham

Basically backwards

Surely a high left plateau of principled "back to basics" (Editorial, 19 November) should not be a recipe for reactionary concepts that mirror basic Tory Victorian values? Surely the left has some vision relevant to the pressing new priorities of the next century? Surely with the imminent collapse of the global environment, we face the greatest challenge the human race has ever had to confront?

Your editorial ignored the crucial fact that our life support system is being destroyed by gross mismanagement. Surely applying humane economics that fit with the environment is an even more fundamental basic than John Cole's assertion that there is nothing more basic than a job ("Welcome to the workless week", 12 November)?

Is socialism about arguing for a

larger share of an ill-gotten cake, or is it about social justice and ecological security for those alive now and the generations that follow us? Come on, wake up you reactionary old buggers, at this exceedingly late hour. My demand is quite simple; I want hope and a future!

Bernard Little
Broomhill
Sheffield

A different kind of home

I hear Sean French singing "There's no place like home" (Diary, 19 November), with his rather long-winded homily on putting homely family virtues and vices in their place. But what homing pigeon led your very literate columnist to Thomas Wolfe the novelist, in place of poet Robert Frost? Was it Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*, or *You Can't Go Home Again*? The correct quotation, *NSS* readers deserve to know, is "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in", by Robert Frost, in 1914, from *The Death of the Hired Man*. It is quoted in so many sermons that I've lost count.

I won't take French's frigid robot removal of the symbolic Good Samaritan home with me. A world where no needs arise for acts of human kindness, compassion, generosity, faith and trust, all absorbed by the impersonality of the state, is surely an automated, mechanistic place where character, morality and the human spirit have no possibility to be tried, tested and



grown until, as the stage manager reflects in *Our Town*: "The eternal part in us (may) come out clear." The phenomenal genuine disinterested response to the *NSS* Defence Fund speaks to that, as does the philanthropy of new proprietors, they being another kind of home.

Rev William Bell Glenesk
Harrogate

Trampling over choice

Sarah Baxter (Political Column, 26 November) appears incapable of distinguishing between the arguments for quotas and the fundamental right of constituency parties to select the candidate of their choice. I have no problem at all with quotas, I might even benefit from them. But the rule change agreed at this year's party conference will result in quotas being used as an excuse to force candidates on to constituencies where they do not command the support of local activists. If Labour is to win the next election, it cannot afford to alienate its activist base in its most marginal constituencies. In 1992, the swing to Labour in these seats was double that of elsewhere. This was the result of sustained local activity, which Labour cannot afford to forego next time. Labour risks driving away its most important assets in the most critical seats.

Moreover, forced quotas will result in the selection of a body of middle-class women who have little background of activity within the party, at the expense of working-class candidates, male and female, who sustain the party on a day-to-day basis. Such people do not tend to feature on

the list of candidates approved by the national party.

The primary failure of those supporting forced quotas is not the objective of the policy, but the means by which they propose its implementation, and the power they provide to the leadership of the party to trample over the rights of local members to select the candidate of their choice.

Jane Powell
London SE18

All-sided criticism

Tower Hamlets Liberal Democrat councillor Jeremy Shaw (Letters, 26 November) says that "the only racism generated by 'expediency' has been that dreamt up" by his political opponents, and talks of the left's "lies" about local Liberal Democrats. But it is not just the left that has expressed concern and dismay at Tower Hamlets' unfair and discriminatory housing policies and practices.

Tower Hamlets has been controlled by the Liberals, then Social and Liberal Democrats, then Liberal Democrats, since 1986. In September 1987, the national Liberal Assembly passed an emergency resolution expressing great concern at the High Court ruling that upheld Tower Hamlets' right to evict 68 homeless Bangladeshi families. In December 1987, the Bishop of Stepney, Jim Thompson, protested over the evictions. In September 1988, Michael Day of the Commission for Racial Equality expressed disappointment over the lack of progress made by the borough after the non-discrimination

notice was served on it in November 1987, and the CRE went back to court in 1989 because of Tower Hamlets' non-compliance with the notice.

The council's own solicitor advised in March 1989 that its "sons and daughters" policy could contravene the Race Relations Act. In November 1991, the Lib Dems' general secretary, Graham Elson, publicly dissociated the national party from the views of Jeremy Shaw, who warned Bangladeshis that "to leave Bangladesh and come to Tower Hamlets and expect the council to house them is totally irresponsible..." In 1992, the High Court condemned the borough for compelling a homeless family to live on the Teviot estate, where racial attacks are rife; in March 1993 the ombudsman said that, in its response to racial attacks on the same estate, Tower Hamlets followed neither its own policy nor basic principles of good administration, leaving perpetrators unpunished and victims un-rehoused, and ordered compensation for three tenants.

I have left out of account the High Court's condemnation a couple of years back of the "dirty tricks" used by a number of Lib Dems who put out a hoax election leaflet as if it were from Labour. Does Jeremy Shaw contend that all these criticisms are machinations of his political opponents? If so, perhaps he should see a psychiatrist.

Carol Hancock
London E8

A tale of sham and shame

Councillor Jeremy Shaw (Letters, 26 November) unsurprisingly paints a less than accurate picture of the behaviour of his Liberal Democrat cronies in Tower Hamlets. Indeed, it was Shaw himself who, when a prospective parliamentary candidate in 1991, visited Bangladesh and said of his trip: "I will tell them that Tower Hamlets is full to bursting."

Shaw also played an active role, as chair of the housing committee in 1987, in trying to evict homeless Bangladeshi families from council bed and breakfast hotels on to the streets. He even has the gall to defend the Lib Dems' plan to "house" homeless families on a redundant car ferry. Over three-quarters of

THIS NORWAY

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• Organisers at the 1994 Lillehammer Winter Olympics in Norway will hand out 40,000 condoms to participants as part of an anti-Aids drive. Games medical co-ordinator David McDonagh said in Oslo yesterday: "They'll be in a little travel bag with a booklet."

All athletes, trainers, journalists, technicians and volunteer workers will get two condoms each. But, Mr McDonagh said, "For the VIPs, we'll evaluate each case individually."—*Yorkshire Post*

those families were of Bangladeshi origin. I agree, bed and breakfast hotels are not the best places to house homeless families, and Tower Hamlets was well known for using the worst hotels in London, but I really can't understand how anyone would think that an old ship would be better. These families would have had no access to self-contained cooking or washing facilities, and housing regulations would not have applied. Tower Hamlets Lib Dems are also responsible for enabling local authorities to carry out immigration checks on housing applicants. The Commission for Racial Equality and many other organisations are deeply worried that housing officers could now effectively be making immigration decisions.

The list is endless. The Lib Dems' record on race relations in Tower Hamlets, especially in the field of housing, is a continuing tale of sham and shame. Shaw's attempt at defending their record is so weak because that record is so evidently indefensible. I, for one, will be interested to see whether the national party finally takes action this time.

*Councillor John Biggs
Leader, Labour Group
Borough of Tower Hamlets*

Doing it the hard way

The more unlikely full employment becomes, the more talk there seems to be on the left of aiming for it. Bryan Gould ("Working back to happiness", 26 November), so often a breath of fresh air, sounds like a dogmatic priest with a fast-diminishing congregation.

The reliance on the labour market as the sole way of organising and validating work has left two great social evils: mass unemployment and a huge amount of socially useful work needing doing. It is hard to imagine a worse conclusion.

The need is for a more radical reorganisation of work and income—reducing the dependency associated with having to find an employer to get a job, assisting community enterprises and finding ways (such as, but not limited to, Citizen's Income) to support the huge contribution made to our national wealth by those in unpaid work. Broadly, it is the poorest people in Britain that

tend to make the greatest unpaid contribution in society.

That doesn't mean that there aren't also more radical ways to promote employment than Gould's prayer for reflation and growth. The most promising way is to look at the employment impact of greening the economy. "Ecological tax reform" would reduce taxes that are effectively taxes on labour, shift it on to resources and pollution, and fund a Citizen's Income. Having said this, there are costs of adjustment; not all the jobs created will be well-paid or easy work, the impact will vary over time and the cumulative impact on employment levels of a green economic transition is hard to predict.

My own view is that there is no way back to full employment through growth, unless one redefines it to the point of meaninglessness. The hard way back, in the absence of a social contract, involves force; either making those out of employment take work at socially unacceptable levels of pay, or making those in employment relinquish working time or income to those out of employment—a project which on its own could prove hard to sustain. It may be that there will continue to be a divergence in public between those that stress "full employment" and those that stress a more radical change to our approach to work. Less acceptable, though, is the talk of the right of "acceptable levels of unemployment".

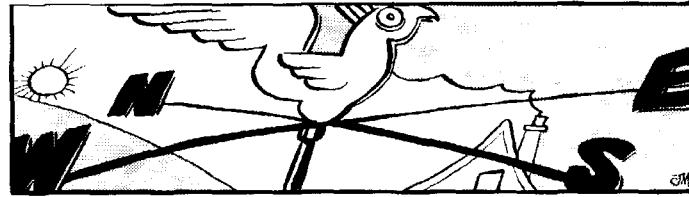
*Ed Mayo
Director
New Economics Foundation
London E1*

An older ailment

Contrary to Stuart Hall ("Thatcherism today", 26 November), there is nothing particularly new or "Thatcherite" about the application of a simplistic model of commercial behaviour to other spheres of activity. I can recall the self same process of thought and their more absurd implications being described under the rubric "Vulgarmarginalismus" by Alec Nove in *Efficiency Criteria for Nationalised Industries*, more than 20 years ago.

*Donald Roy
London SW15*

FRINGE BENEFITS



Colin Ward hears another grim tale of failure to meet housing needs

No sooner had I told last week the saga of May Savidge and her determination to keep her ancient house, when I heard, from Helen Knibb, a far less triumphant story. She and a friend had written an article in a north Wales paper about the need for local authorities to be more sensitive to people's actual predicaments. One day, Heather Morton made a trip to the local town to buy meat for her dogs, and it chanced to be wrapped in that newspaper.

So she wrote to Helen with her story. She is a woman of 55, disabled with osteo-arthritis who, after spending years nursing her invalid mother, moved in 1985 to Tyn-y-Pant Bach, a 150-year-old two-roomed cottage measuring 14 feet by 22, with no services, flush toilet or bath and no electricity. She uses bottled gas and has had to repair the windows with polythene, but her dogs have the freedom of her half-acre of land. She didn't choose to live the way she does. The property was what she could afford.

Last year, Miss Morton applied for a renovation grant from Arfon borough council. But, as she told the *Caernarfon Herald*: "I never dreamt when I applied for grant help that I could risk losing my home, but it seems that I have stirred up a real hornet's nest."

This is putting it mildly, for as a result of her application and the statutory inspection that followed, the council reached the following conclusion: that a demolition or closure order should be served on her home.

"Chief environmental health officer, Geoffrey Robinson, explained that with a demolition order served, Miss Morton would be required to demolish the cottage. 'In default of that, the council should demolish the property themselves, and sell what materials they can and any outstanding debt still remaining would go as a charge on the land.' Arfon chief technical officer, Ieuan Lewis, explained: 'If you live in a hovel, and decide in your own wisdom to

apply for a grant, the property's habitation fitness is one of the major factors to be considered.'"

Builders are said to have estimated that it would cost £40,000-£50,000 to make the place habitable. But this seems to be based on the assumption that it should have two or three bedrooms because this is what "most people" would want. A local builder believes that the cottage could be renovated, using traditional methods, for about £10,000.

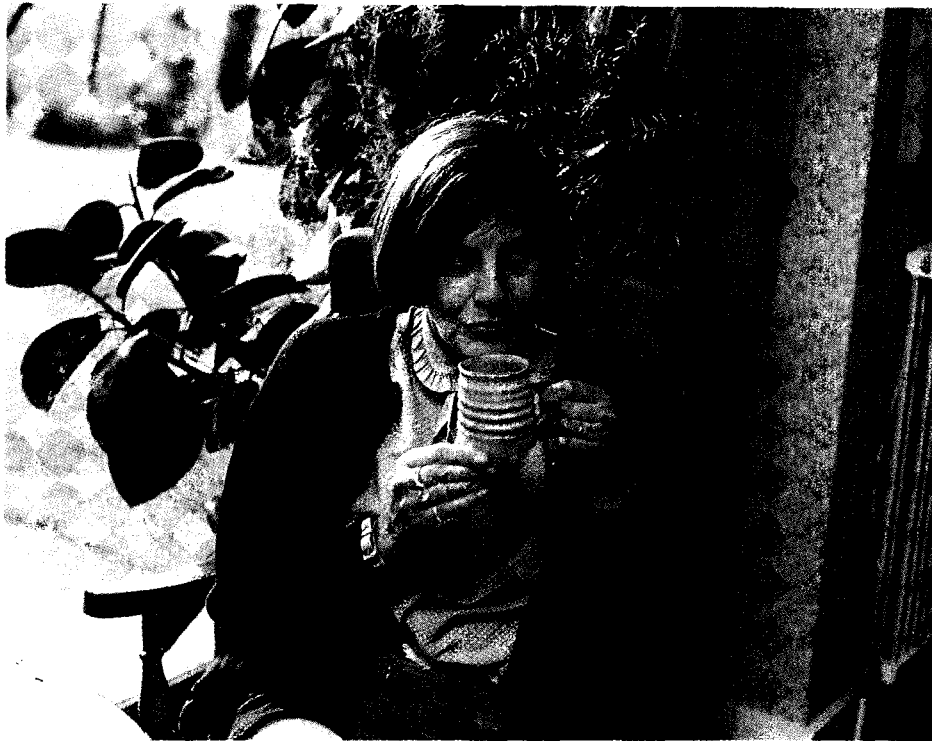
Why the discrepancy, Helen Knibb asks. She thinks it is because the money for renovation grants comes from central government funds, so by making such high estimates and demanding extra work, the local council brings more money into the area. "For Heather, this means homelessness and bankruptcy because her modest needs are not enough to supply a rake-off to the rest of the community. *She is too poor to be helped.*"

The publicity generated in Gwynedd has led to an offer from an anonymous individual to improve the cottage. But "the catch is that the deal may be stopped by the council if they choose to enforce the closing order; and even if they don't, the value of the cottage will have dropped by half."

For there's another story here. It isn't only in north Wales that planning consent, granted by local councils, is more valuable than the sites it applies to. Where I live, any derelict cottage or barn with permission for house-building is an asset. The old building doesn't matter.

Someone like Miss Morton, struggling for independence (who must have saved the public purse vast sums by looking after her mother and herself) is just a nuisance if your task is to administer the law.

But would readers in north Wales note that Miss Morton's most pressing need at the moment is to find a volunteer architect willing to draw up simple plans for a bathroom and kitchen?



Patenting of its genes for new medicines, insecticides, and improved seed varieties, are not the only horrors awaiting the south, reports **Kate de Selincourt**

Future shock

Gatt may soon be upon us—if the agreement is actually signed this month. As we reported (“Unfree trade”, 19 November), under its trade-related intellectual property rights (Trips) agreement, the north will be able to use biotechnology to “harvest” genes from plants with useful properties, mainly found in the south and only known about through local trial and error over the centuries. Patenting the results will force impoverished southern farmers to buy seeds and insecticides made more expensive by the inclusion of genes discovered, in effect, by themselves.

But biotechnology may be poised to have even more devastating effects on the south than is currently imagined. For biotechnology is poised to end the south’s “monopoly” on producing many basic commodities needed by the industrial north. The changes will lead to worsening exploitation of workers and environments in the south, and will harm economies of countries heavily dependent on the targeted crops.

So far, research is under way to modify or replace coffee, tobacco, sugar, cocoa, coconut, palm oil and high-value crops including opium, ginseng and the anti-cancer drug, vincristine.

Oils, in particular, are the subject of intense research as they are currently imported not

just as food, but as the basis for enormous soap, detergent and cosmetic industries in the north. Research is geared to replacing the more expensive oils of coconut, cocoa and olive with substitutes engineered from the cheaper palm oil, cheap northern oilseeds such as rape and sunflower, and newly developed northern crop plants. For example, a wildflower called cuphea is the subject of a breeding programme to produce a cheap oil, while oilseed rape is being genetically engineered with the aim of altering the oil to mimic coconut and palm oil.

Genetic engineering is also expected to enable crops that at present thrive only in tropical or sub-tropical climates to grow in a wider range of conditions, thereby increasing the number of countries competing to produce at the lowest price, or even making production possible in the consumer country. For example, *Biotechnology and Development Monitor* (September 1990) predicts that geneticists will attempt to develop frost-tolerant coffee.

To Calestous Juma, of the Africa Centre for Technology Studies, “the danger to many third-world countries is clear. Low-income producers comprising a significant proportion of the working population and contributing significant amounts of foreign exchange earnings could be wiped out.”

A nice cup of cocoa before bedtime—and it was grown just down the road

Genetically engineered crop substitutes will represent the acceleration of a trend whose effects have already been widely felt in the south. Enzyme chemistry has already allowed US soft-drinks manufacturers and other food industries to substitute sugar with corn syrup and other sweeteners. In 1984, four billion tons, 4-5 per cent of total raw sugar, was replaced by corn syrup.

As Guido Ruivenkamp points out in his book, *Biotechnology and the Third World*: “Large falls in the price of sugar and exploitation of plantation workers are the immediate consequences of the increasing international competition.” It seems likely that the bio-technological substitution of other commodities will have similar effects.

Ruivenkamp goes on to warn that: “Each national development plan based on, for example, increasing sugar production or soy production can be negated by technical developments elsewhere. Price guarantees for developing countries are out of the question now. The real or even fictitious possibility of relocating tropical produce from the south to production in factories in the north is an important way for companies to put developing countries under pressure, and guarantee for themselves the flow of these products at a ‘reasonable price’.”

He adds, echoing a point made by Vandana Shiva in *Monocultures of the Mind*, that seed biotechnology seems geared to making the same crop tolerant of all kinds of conditions, and “less and less dependent on soil and climate . . . One of the consequences is that crops can be cultivated in several regions, resulting in different regions becoming interchangeable production units.”

Kalemani Mulongoy and colleagues at the Institut de Recherche pour les Huiles et Oleagineux, Cote D’Ivoire, warned (*BDM*, March 1993) that: “It is imperative for a country to anticipate possible adverse impacts of biotechnology on a national economy. If substitution hampers exportation to Europe and the US, it is necessary for countries depending on raw material exports to encourage national processing activities, local use of ‘finished’ products, and diversification of its export products.”

Pyrethrum

Around 100,000 small farmers in Kenya make a living from growing pyrethrum, on tiny plots only 0.25 hectares to 1 hectare in size. Pyrethrum flowers are processed into relatively environmentally friendly insecticides, and the crop earns Kenya \$23 million in foreign exchange each year. The US is the largest importer of pyrethrum in the world.

This has led the US department of commerce to award \$1.2 million to the firm Agridyne, “to research a process to develop a botanical insecticide”. Agridyne plans to “use genetic engineering to develop a key active intermediate normally produced in the pyrethrum flower, which would then be converted to produce almost unlimited supplies of

pyrethrum". Other firms are developing alternative methods of pyrethrin synthesis.

Kenyan pyrethrum farmers are already struggling with low and unpredictable prices for their product, which is not all that cheap to grow, requiring fertiliser and, ironically, insecticide. The Kenya government has defeated some overseas competition by promoting the development of higher-yielding varieties, making the Kenya product more competitive. But the arrival of a state-subsidised home-engineered substitute on the US market—at worst making the US self-sufficient in pyrethrum—could undermine all this, and would be a hard blow for Kenyan pyrethrum farmers to survive.

Cocoa

Another import that costs the north a great deal is cocoa, and consuming countries are anxious to cut the proportion of the \$3-billion-a-year trade they pay for imports of cocoa. Western countries are spending millions of dollars on bio-engineered cocoa replacements. These could devastate the economies of cocoa-producing countries already reeling under the impact of falling prices.

Cocoa is not just important for making chocolate, but is widely used in foods and cosmetics. It is particularly valued because it is solid at normal air temperatures, but liquefies on the skin—or "melts in the mouth". There are various techniques under development, the main ones involving the use of genetically engineered bacteria that "ferment" cheaper vegetable oils into a cocoa-butter substitute; cultures of cells from cocoa trees producing cocoa in factory vats; and the incorporation of cocoa genes into soybeans so cocoa could be grown in consuming countries.

Biotechnology is also being used to upgrade the fermentation process that converts raw beans into chocolate. This means cheap, lower-quality cocoa from plantations in Brazil, Indonesia and Malaysia can replace higher-quality beans from smallholdings in West Africa. Food giants Hershey and Nestlé are funding much of this research—in universities—to develop a biotechnological synthesis of cocoa-butter. Recently US government scientists have synthesised something quite like cocoa-butter from cotton-seed oil and sunflower oil.

As the US department of Agriculture put it in *Agricultural Research* (June 1992): "It may be possible one day to nibble on a chocolate bar and narrow the foreign trade gap at the same time." Meanwhile, in the EC, the food industry is lobbying to have the strict regulations about how much cocoa must be combined in a product for it to be called "chocolate" related. According to the OECD, substitution is not a priority while cocoa prices are at their present low level. But this makes it clear that cocoa producers can never expect a better price.

Kate de Selincourt is author of "Genetic Engineering Targets Third World Crops", available from the Panos Institute, 9 White Lion Street, London N1 0PD. Tel: 071-278 1111

GREEN GAUGE



Vicky Hutchings enters into heated debate with the government, only to find it all a waste of energy

Back in April, Green Gauge wearily noted the start of the Tory-dominated Commons Environment Select Committee's investigation of energy efficiency in buildings. Wearily, because the list of those summoned to appear before it contained the usual names—Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Association for the Conservation of Energy, the Combined Heat & Power Association—and the evidence they would be giving would be the same as they had offered to various committees of the Commons and the Lords since the late 1980s.

Last week the committee reported, making enthusiastic use of a rather mournful vocabulary of *deeply disappointed*s, *concerned*s, *remain concerned*s and *insufficient*s. The remarks by Robert Jones MP, the committee's chair, are worth quoting at some length:

"My committee has been deeply disappointed that such little progress has been made in implementing energy efficiency since the Energy Committee's report on the subject in 1991. The Secretary of State for the Environment has himself stated that 'our traditional energy policies are not sustainable'. Actions will have to follow words if the UK's potential for cost-effective energy efficiency is to be realised, especially in the context of the government's commitments to reducing greenhouse gases and promoting sustainable development following the Earth Summit in Rio last year." And you can't be clearer than that.

Indeed, over the question of greenhouse gases in particular: "Government projections show that emissions are expected to rise more rapidly after the year 2000, and yet the government has set no targets for reductions beyond that date." In fact, as Green Gauge reported late last year, the government finally agreed to the earlier deadline of the year 2000 because the recession and the dash for gas will almost certainly keep emissions pretty stable until then—with very little action needed by the government. After that, carbon dioxide emissions could rise by 178 per cent.

Putting the government's own house in order is also very dear to the committee's heart, believing that the message "would be more effective if [the government] were to take a number of steps to improve the coordination of its own efforts".

It was thanks to the questions asked in the Commons by James Clappison MP, one of the new Tory intake for 1992, that we found out back in October exactly what "progress has been made by government departments towards their 15 per cent energy efficiency

target" for 1995, measured in terms of energy expenditure per square metre of floor area.

By now, if the departments were on target, we should be seeing a 6 per cent improvement. However, the answer Clappison received was not very encouraging. Overall, the departments are 0.2 per cent *less* efficient. Of course, this figure disguises the excellent records of Transport, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Customs and National Savings, which all beat the 6 per cent target (Environment came in at 5 per cent), while hiding Education's shame (energy expenditure per square metre up by 83 per cent) and the non-prison end of the Home Office (up by 21 per cent). Defence, the largest energy consumer, has yet to release its figures. Whitehall's "green" ministers took an unusually strong line, and announced that "further improvement was required".

The list of recommendations from the select committee contains all the known and sensible methods to make Britain a less polluting country and a warmer place to live: proper funding for the Energy Saving Trust, changes to the bizarre regulations governing the electricity and gas industries, which prevent them spending anything like the correct amount on energy-efficiency projects, boosting combined heat and power schemes, and better building standards. On CHP, the report seems to be shaking its very pages in disbelief: "We believe the UK cannot afford . . . to persist with the enormous waste of energy (enough to heat all the buildings in Great Britain) that results from the widespread use of inefficient means of electricity generation."

Finally, on the vexed question of VAT on domestic fuel, the committee is crystal clear: "If the Chancellor's proposal to impose VAT goes ahead, then it is essential that the government develop a clear strategy for energy conservation as well as compensation for poor households. We recommend a comprehensive programme to improve energy efficiency for low-income households, which includes extending the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme and the current capital receipts spending 'holiday', to enable local authorities to invest in approved energy-efficiency projects and combined heat and power projects." Well, there's been some move on the home energy scheme and some help with heating bills, described by the opposition as "inadequate". But without the rest in place, and with this government's record of inaction over the rest of the committee's past recommendations, it is clear that VAT on domestic fuel should never have been imposed at all.

ICA TALKS

6 December 19.30hrs

RICHARD SENNETT: DISFIGURING THE FLESH

In the history of Western civilisation, representation of the body has been marked by a struggle between dominant and collective images of the individual form. **Richard Sennett**, author of *Flesh and Stone: the Body and the City in Western Civilisation* (Faber), discusses how our bodies carry the scars of the past and have inherited a legacy of confusion about corporeal worth. Tickets £5.50 (£4.50 ICA Members).

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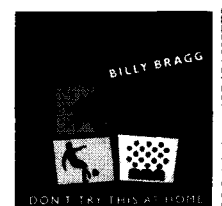
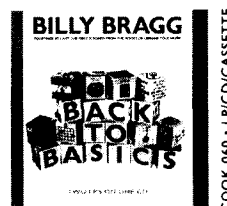
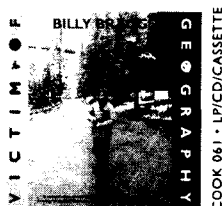
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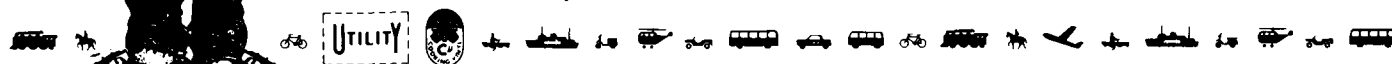
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Major artists are using video to explore questions of life, death, identity and meaning. **Marina Benjamin** hopes that the art world can shed its blinkers and tune in

Ghosts in the machine

There is no good reason for the invisibility of video in the art world hierarchy, only bad ones such as critical laziness and deference to the art market. Old-school critics feel uncomfortable with video; it's not within their territory. And art dealers and galleries offer them little incentive to do their homework. The bottom line is that video art is not a saleable commodity (if it is a commodity). You can't buy tapes and hang them on the wall.

Suddenly last summer, everything changed. The Documenta exhibition in Germany set a Chinese whisper loose among curators and critics. The mutterings declared that video had finally come of age. As if to prove the point, two major British galleries—MOMA, Oxford, and the Whitechapel in London—are staging exhibitions by two of the video world's grand masters: Gary Hill and Bill Viola respectively. In a recent interview, Gary Hill remarked on the current flurry of interest by suggesting that perhaps it was the art world that had finally come of age.

Viola and Hill are both important artists, interested in craft, engaging with poetics, aesthetics and the quest for truth; they have earned their international reputations. They are also both American, have both crossed the commercial divide and are both represented by big-time dealers.

The Hill exhibition consists of five installations made between 1990 and 1993. In two

pieces, the body is broken down into fragments and reconstituted to conjure up primitive living presences that allow the imagination to run riot over the problem of their indeterminate identity.

In a catacomb-like recess, a cluster of variously sized monitors displays assorted body parts faintly twitching with life, accompanied by whisperings and bubblings suggestive of the primordial soup, seething with life. While on a wall-mounted crossbar of 12 monitors, body fragments flicker over the screens at a rate of 30 frames per second to the incessant and aggressive sound of scribbling graphite. The primordial soup has generated a wild life-form, threatening to break free.

The remaining pieces invite contemplation of the silent image, but "Tall Ships" disallows passivity. You enter a long black corridor. As you proceed along it, images appear one by one along its walls. They are people, emerging from a pin-point and advancing towards you until they are life size. They stand before you, confront you, make eye contact, scrutinise you. They seem to have an agenda.

You linger, awaiting communication, but they turn on their heels and disappear into the black. You feel rejected, alone. You long for language. As Stuart Morgan writes in the catalogue; "When we are tired of art, we simply walk away. The last thing we expect is that it will do the same to us."

If Hills' world is one of deconstructions and

inversions, Viola's is one of totalities: the point at which the individual collides with the universal. Viola's long fascination with the world beyond—the shadow side of life, as well as the hereafter—is here extended to an interest in juxtaposing origins with endings. The Whitechapel installations explore the state of life and the boundaries of birth and death: a sort of time travel.

In "Between Heaven and Earth", two monitors, a stalagmite and stalactite, confront each other at eye level. The face of a dying woman projects downwards and is reflected onto the upward-looking face of a new-born child. They merge into a single image; birth and death become simultaneous: an eye for an eye. Life itself is lost amid the spectacular significance of these two moments.

In "Nantes Triptych", life is represented as a mysterious limbo state awkwardly suspended between the defining points of birth and death. In "Slowing Turning Narrative", it is dramatised as a puzzling misalignment between interior and external realities. A mirror, backing a revolving image of the artist, casts viewers as phantoms: flickering presences in the noisy world of experience colourfully washing over the walls of the room.

Particularly haunting is the silent installation "Sleepers", in which Viola has sunk seven monitors bearing images of sleeping people into the bottoms of seven oil drums,

brimful of water. They seem to address the contradictory desires for survival and oblivion—natural innocence versus technological contamination. Birth and death meet once more as eggs, cocoons, sci-fi time suspension capsules and the liquid-nitrogen filled barrels of cryogenics are all evoked.

Coinciding with the MOMA and Whitechapel exhibitions is the John Hansard Gallery's showing of Judith Goddard's "Reservoir": an ambitious installation mixing video, electricity and water. In a whitened room, the spark of life is generated, Frankenstein-fashion, by a Wimshurst machine and projected onto images of a waterfall. A black room echoes these preoccupations using an electrocardiogram and dripping water. Like Viola and Hill, Goddard has transcended technology to reach something elemental.

Video as an art form is a genuine hybrid, with sculpture, experimental film, conceptual and performance art in its chromosomes. It's capable of endless mutations, in gallery or site-specific environments, and can evolve by incorporating new technologies. But is it fit enough to survive?

The question is an old one, and art world cognoscenti are tiring of it. But as postmodernism teeters on the brink of its own demise, the art eugenicists call for a return to a Golden Age of purity. They eulogise the inherent superiority of painting over any other form.

So in the absence of critical literature, video artists themselves have had to explain the difference between what they do and popular perceptions of video, including the naive notion that everyone who commits domestic dramas to camcorder is an artist. Is it any wonder that so many artists have gone out of their way to de-familiarise the medium, turning their backs on its cosy image and on our passive, unreflective relationship to it?

Neither is it surprising that some have failed. They have pushed theory to the point of incomprehensibility, forsaken narrative structure to the point of failing to communicate, and mistaken navel-gazing for self-reflection. Yet if there is a good deal of bad video art around, there's an abundance of bad painting to match it.

These days, where an excess of novelty poses as innovation, there is a real danger that purist narrow-mindedness might win the day. Such is the climate that video artists have to negotiate. It's not so much that video has fallen victim to purist spleen but that it has been ignored, particularly in Britain. Whether there will be a long-term spin-off from the American shows for British video artists such as Goddard, David Hall, Tina Keane and Keith Piper remains to be seen. The outcome may depend on whether the art world, as Gary Hill hopes, really has come of age.

Gary Hill, "In Light of the Other", MOMA, Oxford, to 9 January; Bill Viola, "Unseen Images", Whitechapel Gallery, 17 December-13 February; Bill Viola, "The Passing", BBC2, Saturday 11 December; Judith Goddard, "Reservoir", John Hansard Gallery, Southampton to 22 December; "Late Show" special on video art, 7 December

As orchestras fight for funds, **Roderic Dunnett** hails a model maestro

From Troy to Waterloo



This week is orchestral nail-biting week. Next may be death-of-the-orchestra week. The Hoffmann committee's recommendation on the future of London's orchestras has reached the hands of the Arts Council. It will decide which one should (at the expense of others) enjoy the lucrative South Bank residency. Soon we should learn the outcome.

Passions have run high since the Arts Council's original commitment to axe London subsidies for two of the capital's four main independent orchestras. And not without reason: unless there are unexpected rabbits in hats (and there may yet be), players face a gloom of Coal Board proportions. Like coal and the railways, British arts are famously undersubsidised. We rightly envy the state munificence of France or Germany, even

while acknowledging their higher GDP. But is the lament for the arts just the special pleading of a comfortable intelligentsia?

Both change and philistinism are to be feared, but they need not automatically be the same. Even new music has benefited, directly or indirectly, from increased sponsorship. So has opera, though in the main houses patrons have more than once helped to bail out a production in crisis. But recession has highlighted the dangers of over-reliance on unpredictable sources.

And one downside of the scramble for cash imposed on music is the way it has been personalised. Music directors are powerful, up-front figures, and hence crucial to their bands' success. The moans directed, say, at the hapless Franz Welser-Möst of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, or at Giuseppe Sinopoli at the Philharmonia, are partly habit. But they also have to do with charisma, sheer musicianship and the ability to "learn on the job"—though it's difficult to think of a decent conductor who hasn't done that.

King of the British conductors' pantheon remains Simon Rattle, whose command of the audiences for his City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is something special. He shows that the conductor as "communicator" may now be not so much a bonus, but essential. During his tenure at the London Symphony Orchestra, Michael Tilson Thomas was, like André Previn before him, a classic example. But might even Toscanini's bandmasterly stiffness hold little interest for us now, as a recent *Omnibus* programme suggested? Would Adrian Boult's beat bore us? Could (dare one whisper it?) even Pierre Boulez seem *outmoded*?

The LPO, still favourite for the South Bank job, is not without its acknowledged *maestri*. Bernard Haitink, still at the Royal Opera, remains its president. Klaus Tennstedt, now the orchestra's conductor laureate, delves into Mahler as few bar Leonard Bernstein have managed since Bruno Walter. And it still has the St Petersburg maestro, Mariss Jansons, as its principal guest conductor. Its chances against the Philharmonia (whose recent Paris residency may point a European way forward for the Hoffmann losers) look good.

Whoever wins the battle of Waterloo, things look lively in the City. Sir Colin Davis, who held three key London posts until 1986 at the BBC, Sadlers' Wells and the Royal Opera, will shortly return from Munich to succeed Tilson Thomas as principal conductor of the LSO: a band that defeated him 30 years ago, when he was the youthful favourite to succeed Pierre Monteux.

Davis' appointment has cheered many. Hailed early on as Beecham's natural successor, his stature in Mozart and the classical repertoire is unquestioned. The same goes for what one might call 20th-century classicism—composers such as Reger and Hindemith—whom he might revive here.

His taste for more modern repertoire is less marked. But Roberto Gerhard, Richard Rodney Bennett and even Peter Maxwell Davies were championed by him at early stages. His

pioneering Tippett, two decades ago, including the Covent Garden premiere of *The Knot Garden*, launched a new phase in the composer's output.

Davis has always been charismatic. But, pace some firebrand early years, his way of working has long since been quieter, laid-back, philosophic: text-centred, not ego-related. He has humour, integrity and few airs. He is approachable and a source of encouragement to young aspirants. (The same might be said of another unsung hero of that generation, Sir Edward Downes.) Players observing some of the younger British conductors today—Paul Daniel or Mark Wigglesworth, for example—might conclude, refreshingly, that some of the oldies' traits have rubbed off.

Perhaps Colin Davis' unique contribution was the recovery of Hector Berlioz from dire neglect. He has moved from *L'Enfance du Christ* via *La Mort de Cléopâtre*, the Shakespearean operatic works and *Benvenuto Cellini* to a culminating triumph: the first full version of Berlioz's masterpiece *The Trojans*, which was not published until the centenary of the composer's death in 1969. Berlioz, who bemoaned the philistinism of his own age, never heard the opera performed entire.

Les Troyens is to be given three concert performances by Davis and the LSO, with chorus and soloists, at the Barbican next week. The complete work is in two halves, split over successive nights except on Sunday, 12 December, when it will be given whole on one afternoon and evening.

As with the *Damnation of Faust*, which the LSO revived two seasons ago, the composer assembled his own text, this time from Virgil's *Aeneid* (a favourite work since childhood). Like the original, it encompasses all emotions—rapture, triumph, despair, optimism, fatalism. Berlioz's text stands as poetry in its own right, much influenced by the writing of his age: late classicism, Victor Hugo's romanticism, the new fire of Baudelaire.

Round it he wove some of the most glorious music ever conceived, a bit like *Don Giovanni*, *Idomeneo*. Bizet, Puccini and Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* all filtered into one. He never ceases to surprise. There are eery touches stemming from Weber; a novel, often uncanny, use of solo woodwind to evoke pathos; Meyerbeerian grandeur offset by sweeping Straussian lines. Then there is the fine characterisation of Dido, Anna, Cassandra; the moments of unmitigated terror (with pre-echoes of Britten); and an almost Purcellian clarity to the final, agonised recitative that confirms Dido in her resolution to die.

Like Wagner's *Ring*, *Les Troyens* constitutes one of the musical peaks of the 19th century. It was arguably the height of his achievement. "Berlioz, like Hector, perished beneath Troy's walls," noted Gounod. That London's best-propped orchestra is prepared to venture programmes of this quality is a sock in the eye for the composer's original "philistines", and perhaps also for a few of our own.

Sir Colin Davis conducts "*Les Troyens*" on 4-5, 8-9 and 12 December at the Barbican



Jonathan Romney looks beyond Disney to the far side of animation

The magic lumps

It's a great linguistic quirk of art history that the French term for still life suggests its exact opposite: *nature morte*. The film term "animation" is charged with the same paradox. The animator's art is less about revivifying dead matter, rousing still things to motion, than the very deadness and artificiality that underlie the "live" motion of cinema. We may think things on the screen are moving of their own accord, but really nothing happens: just still picture after still picture, enough per second to deceive us.

But animation invariably lets its founding inertness show. And the most philosophical animation does more than that. It actively displays itself falling apart at the seams, crumbling into its constituent still parts. That may be why animation, throughout its history, is so obsessed with representing death—from the singing skeletons that stalk through early Disney and Max Fleischer cartoons to the morbid decomposition of clay heads in the work of the Czech animator Jean Svankmajer. Where the "Golem principle" of animation is about bringing dead clay to miraculous life, Svankmajer turns everything back into clay.

It's easy to forget all this now that drawn animation has become so adept at disguising its roots with high-tech trickery. Disney's new *Aladdin* (from 3 December) flows so liquidly, it's like pure organic electricity. You would think the light had just generated itself. Two other current animation releases offer an antidote to this intoxicating slickness, but I'm

The animal kingdom: Starewicz's "Tale of the Fox"

not being anti-Hollywood in saying that—just materialist. It's always welcome when film shows what it's made of (literally) and a few creaks and groans can be stimulating.

The Tale of the Fox (Everyman Cinema from 3 December) is an extraordinary thing, as finely-tuned yet endearingly rickety as a Fabergé wind-up egg. It's a film made in France in 1930 by the great Polish animator Wladyslaw Starewicz, best known for his extraordinary insect stop-motion films, which took anthropomorphism to a bizarre extreme by casting bugs in louche melodramas. *Cameraman's Revenge* (1911) is a tale of sibling rivalry, infidelity and voyeurism, in which two beetles clash over an inheritance of warm beer.

The medieval fantasy *The Tale of the Fox* is much closer to the anthropomorphism of the Disney school. Its characterisation is pretty much a precursor of *The Jungle Book*, but its obsessive meticulousness makes it quite extraordinary. Frogs, bugs and small birds still get a look in, but this time Starewicz is dealing with flesh and fur, with a taxidermist's fine eye. He really gets right under the skin, moving his creatures not just on the outside but internally too, as if by hidden sinews. Fur bristles, nostrils twitch, a lion queen's bosom swells with passion as an amorous cat pays court (unsettlingly, they're Margaret Dumont and Groucho Marx to a whisker).

The very literary French text and bombastic diction, added in the early 1940s, detract slightly from the pleasure. But they can't dilute the extraordinary medieval design and the sheer flexibility of Starewicz's universe. Everything's mutable here. At one moment, the animals seem enormous, grimacing and pulsating in close-up; the next, they're mute, isolated in stylised winter landscapes or crowding together in vast battle scenes.

There's an extraordinary cynicism about it as well. It's pure folk tale, with the Fox as the traditional trickster figure beloved of Propp and other analysts of narrative. That means we're asked to side with a hero who consistently outwits the other animals by snitching

on them to humans, who are only too happy to bring out the cudgels (when the Fox's victims get battered, rather dainty snowflake figures blossom above their heads). In the final showdown, in which the Fox wheels out an array of Heath Robinson war engines, he's as venomously sneaky as Macaulay Culkin beating the dumb crooks in *Home Alone*. This is the limit of anthropomorphism—the Fox defeats the other beasts because he's more cunning, which is to say more human.

Nothing so unfashionably anthropocentric happens in *The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb* (ICA Cinema from 10 December), in which animated matter takes its revenge on humanity in a big way. This hour-long piece by Bristol animators the bolexbrothers (sic) is creepy, dystopian stuff—what you'd get if Mother Goose swallowed *The Fly*. A mistake in a fertility lab leads to a woman giving birth to a Benny toy homunculus, which is then shunted off to a research centre where it encounters a hellish menagerie of hybrid monsters: disembodied mouths and eyes, a gryphon made of bat wings and wires.

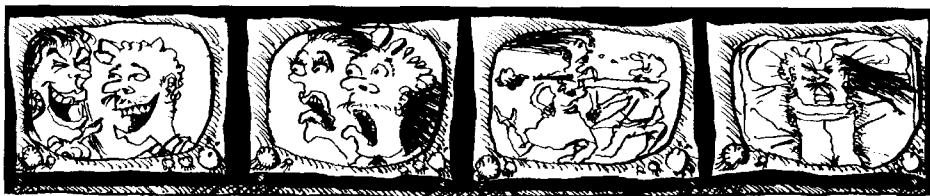
The creations are grisly enough, but the real horror is in what's done with the live actors, who are animated in exactly the same way as the models. They're pixillated; that is, shot frame by frame and moved imperceptively each time. The result is a jerky, dehumanising effect. Grotesque characters lumber robotically around, fixed expressions contorting their faces, while the surface of their skin flickers and shimmies. Models and humans both move this way, and at the same time, so that you always get different types of motion going on in the same shot to paradoxical effect. While inanimate matter—rolling newspapers, circling flies—surges with an uncontrollable energy of its own, human flesh turns back to modelling clay, golemised.

This process is echoed in the theme of the film, which concerns the artificial creation of life. The story is none too original, nor is the world it's set in: the now-familiar post-apocalyptic urban limbo inhabited by lurching Gumbies in singlets and Oxfam overcoats. The film's appeal, instead, is in the style. But there are incidental touches that set the gorge rising pleasurably: the sight of fish (and worse) writhing on a plate, and the rather distressing figure of Tom himself, a piteous, earless blob. It's manipulative, of course, but if you wonder what David Cronenberg might have made of *The Clangers*, it's for you.

Starewicz's films are about pullulating life. They celebrate the uncontrollable expansiveness of things. The bolexbrothers come right at the end of the line. Theirs is a hymn to decay and deadness that reduces the human figure to silly putty. But, arguably, that's where live cinema's headed anyway.

What are the muscle boys of the current action genre but overblown wind-up toys? As humans in Hollywood continue to do the work of automata, it's salutary to be reminded how much more life-like automata can be. It may be that humans in film were a complete distraction all along, and that Starewicz and his bugs figured it out back in the 1910s. Stop motion is where the real "live" action is.

JACI STEPHEN



The Knocking of Melvyn is a national pastime, attracting the sort of venom usually reserved for social workers

Nobody seems to excite as much envy and vitriol as a successful television personality. When that person is not only a well-known presenting face, but a spokesperson for the arts, television dramatist, radio host and novelist, too, he attracts the kind of venom usually reserved for politicians, social workers and single mothers.

The Knocking of Melvyn is a national pastime to many media folk: journalists, who can't understand why they're not on the telly instead of Melvyn; has-beens, who can't understand why they weren't born Melvyn; and seething, would-be novelists, who haven't yet sussed that, in order to get a book published, you first have to write it.

In the other camp is a loyal band of Melvynites who admire the man's energy, commitment to the arts and good sportsmanship. How many novelists would turn up to accept the *Literary Review's* Bad Sex Award, given for what the judges decided was a passage of gratuitous, badly written sex in *A Time to Dance*? How many writers would participate in a satirical scene that sent up their own work, as Melvyn did in last year's Bore Awards? Germaine Greer? Lynn Barber? Or any of the other names called upon to heap abuse on "the new macho Melvyn" in last week's *Daily Mail*.

I must confess to being a closet Melvynite. When I wanted to move to London ten years ago, I wrote the usual round of letters to newspaper editors and TV companies. I was unemployed, living in Wales, and had been desperately trying to "get into the media". Phonecalls and articles were ignored. I had one reply to a letter: from Melvyn, who invited me to LWT to talk about numerous career paths I might take. Years later, having just failed to land a researcher's job in LWT's Current Affairs Department, my letter was passed on to Arts, who offered a guiding hand in other directions: Melvyn again. If only newspaper editors and journalists were as giving of their time, encouragement and support, the press might bring through a few more writers who want to make a career out of writing, rather than a career out of criticising the writing of others.

The hatred of success is, of course, a peculiarly British phenomenon—or rather, hatred of success in a number of areas. Kenneth Branagh is attacked for being director, actor, and, heaven forbid, somebody who can raise money to get films made in Britain. He "does too much". Melvyn, too, "does too much".

The criticism of a person Doing Too Much lies at the heart of the anti-Melvyn campaign. Clive James has been a victim of the DTM critics for years (in fact, in the same week the *Mail* attacked Melvyn, Peter McKay was delivering another of his top-drawer, ever-reliable attacks on Clive in the *Mail's* sister-paper, the *Evening Standard*). Television personalities are particularly susceptible to it, owing to the mysterious belief among journalists that anyone who has the good fortune to be on the box should stay there.

But DTM goes deeper than that: it threatens mediocrity, by reminding the less prolific and less energetic how much can really be accomplished when you put your mind to it. There is nothing the untalented like less than having their laziness and incapacity for hard work reinforced.

The DTM journalists are generally the ones who also knock awards ceremonies, but they missed an event and half at the *Evening Standard Drama Awards* on Monday. The edited show went out on ITV that night, but only just. Halfway through Miriam Margoles' speech, when giving the award for Best Comedy, the technology went down.

Margoles burst into a spontaneous round of joke-telling, as Ned Sherrin continued to worry about whether he would get the autocue back. Vyvyan Harmsworth declared it was a moment in which "I see it as my duty to get in more booze." Others saw it as a good reason to start telling Harold Pinter stories (such as the one when Harold returned to a favoured restaurant to find the management had replaced linen napkins with paper ones, much to his fury. Then there was the one about him throwing Ian McEwan out of his own birthday celebration. And, of course, the one about him throwing out the waiter whom he accused of being a journalist—or was it a German spy? Anyway, he was a waiter).

One particularly breathtaking moment was when National Theatre director Richard Eyre and actor Jonathan Pryce stood side by side, talking. So concentrated a gathering of charisma and sex appeal could only prompt a girl to ask: "How much for the pair?"

It was probably Carlton Television's greatest achievement, that the show made it on to the air, albeit without major lighting. But television still couldn't do justice to the real thing: Margoles' ad libs, Bill Nighy's beauty (OK, how much for the three?), and the drunken delights of spending an afternoon in a room full of luvvies who Do Too Much, and aren't afraid to say so.



Left: *Untitled 90, 1981 (from "Centrefolds")*;
below: *Untitled Film Still 43, 1979*

Surface damage

CINDY SHERMAN 1975-1993

Texts by Rosalind Krauss and Norman Bryson

Rizzoli, £45

Angela McRobbie

Since the mid-1970s, Cindy Sherman has become known as an influential American artist working in the field of photography. She produces images of women which, drawing on her own body as model, set that model up as a kind of actress in a variety of roles. Despite the highly disturbing, even horrific, images of her later work, Sherman's reputation culminated in a recent show at the Saatchi Gallery. This volume brings together her now-famous images with lesser-known work.

The opening images are possibly the most familiar. However, the critic Laura Mulvey has pointed out that it is now impossible to look at the early "Film Stills", with their interest in youthful, vulnerable femininity, without taking into account the later images of decay, disintegration and sexual nausea.

In these darker photographs, Sherman assembles images of bodily parts scattered across the ground and of huge "pornographic" plastic dolls, copulating lewdly with enlarged sexual organs and matted pubic hair. Elsewhere, there are images of broken skin surfaces and of tissue disgorging waste fluids and excreta.

This book documents the speed with which Sherman has pursued a distinctive, but also completely uncompromising project. Its time-span parallels almost exactly the emergence of feminist theories of representation, including the re-reading of both Freud and Lacan, which have in turn been used to interpret Sherman's work.

And just as we are now aware, in 1993, of the unviability of a single feminist theory of sexual subordination that can be applied in that universalistic way in which early feminism believed, so also can we see in Sherman's photographs a sense of disenchantment. We observe her loss of faith in what can be done



within the confines of femininity, as it has been defined in popular culture, and as it has been inhabited and enjoyed by women, including herself.

She turns away from the image of the female body (which has always been her own body) and replaces it with "spare parts": plastic manikins bought from medical suppliers, prosthetics, grotesque masks, false "Halloween" noses. Cosmetics are no longer used, Madonna-style, to create images of glamorous femininity, but to fake scar tissue in images of wounding, burning or violent assault. They can no longer invite that quality of "to-be-looked-at-ness", which is what she explores and perhaps enjoys (as we all do) in the first cinematic photographs.

There is an absolute logic in this imaginative progression, which nonetheless refuses the more conventional feminist request that it explain itself. The first images obsessively explore the "interiority of femininity". In-

itially, they look to Hollywood, and to the collective fantasy of the 1950s. As Mulvey argues, US capitalism made itself desirable through the social construction of glamour. These images show subjects who look like what Rosalind Krauss calls "Hitchcock's plucky but vulnerable career girls". And they already touch on three elements that remain central to Sherman's work.

First, the extent to which memories of popular culture, in this case cinema, inform and define experience and identity. "It was just like a movie" is a meaningful statement about who we are and how we see ourselves. Second, there is the dynamic of female development. These images, and the "centrefolds" done for *Artforum* in the early 1980s, show girlish dreams, even when they are dreamed by grown women. The iconography of girlhood and even of childhood (in the Freudian sense) remains with Sherman throughout.

Third, there is in these images a strong visual rendering of the false, the artificial, the dressed-up quality of femininity. On occasion, the acrylic surface of Sherman's wigs breaks the illusion that cosmetics look "natural". They draw attention both to texture and surface as concerns of the artist, and to the texture and surface of the female body. In the rest of her work, she moves from the outside world of popular fantasy, in fashion magazines and films, into the interior world of the unconscious: childhood fears, childhood fascination with bodily functions, and female fears of being ravished.

In the first instance, the mood is less sombre. The images from 1975 to 1983 mark an exploration of the self as constructed through images drawn from consumer culture. In particular, Sherman takes that field of popular culture that focuses on girls and women, and requires that they become fixated on images of other women as they flick through the thousands of fashion photos and advertisements that show women's bodies every day.

These images are endless, and they are looked at repetitively. They are always objects of aspiration—hence the fine attention to legs, underarms, ankles, shoulders, hair, eyebrows and so on—but they must also be discarded to obey the logic of consumer capitalism. They have to make way for next month's new products.

Thus this world of feminine imagery posits simultaneously an experience of lack and of wholeness. For the commercial image must be discarded as soon as it is achieved. But it still shows a whole woman as she should be.

Sherman's early photographs eerily explore this continent of female desire from within the interior space of the bedroom: the teenage private space, next to the telephone. There, her "heavier" bodies lounge and sometimes languish. They are photographed from above, emphasising the space of the body that spills out of the frame. These "horizontal" images bring the viewer into the heartland of the culture of femininity, at such a close range that they inevitably disturb the balance be-



The model strikes back: a Cindy Sherman "Old Master" (Untitled 228, 1990)

tween the girl flicking through the magazine and the voyeur at whom Sherman points a finger of accusation.

From this point, the pictures enter a different psychic and social space. They retain the hallmarks of femininity, and are therefore not "angry" and "feminist". Nor will they renounce art and representation as collusive, as many political artists have done. They stick with the feminine and retain a commitment to art, though they do this through the filters of the "death of the author" (poststructuralism) and the repudiation of the authentic or the original (postmodernism).

From 1984, Sherman begins to play more insistently with every element in her work. The turning-point comes somewhere between the "Pink Robes Color Tests" of the early 1980s and the "Fashion" series of 1983-84. First, she begins to dissolve herself in the lighting, with camera techniques that create images in which she is barely there. Instead, there are only "gleams and reflections", as this section is entitled. She becomes the product of this effect; hardly the artist any more.

The work for *Vogue* that follows shows her parodying fashion photography. She did not do what *Vogue* expected. Far from inventing herself as a model, she emphasised (or constructed) a thick waist and shapeless breasts. In place of fashion cosmetics, she applied make-up that made her look like a victim of burning, scalding or abuse. *Vogue*, it seems, was not impressed.

This year she has returned to abuse and violation wrought upon the body. But before she does this, she explores childhood night-

mares and monsters. And then she turns violently upon the world of the Old Masters, on whom she imposes herself with her artists' materials of false breasts and damp, protruding nipples. She sits there in the place of Raphael's mistress. She unseats the old master, and inserts herself into his image—parodying his position and unsettling ours.

In the final sequence, Sherman's photographs use dolls with huge gaping holes for vaginas. Perhaps they refer obliquely to the role of dolls in helping children to describe sexual abuse. Simultaneously, they touch the world of the pornographic imagination.

In retaining such a close connection to the real world of social and psychic pain, and to the lived condition of femininity, Sherman pushes to the limit the question of what constitutes art. This work confounds the desire to be looked at and hung on the wall. It is important not just for this reason, but because it addresses with boldness and vision the necessity for art to think both inside and outside its own boundaries.

Angela McRobbie is principal lecturer in sociology at Thames Valley University

Mind the gap

GEORGES PEREC: A LIFE IN WORDS

David Bellos

Harvill, £35

Shaun Whiteside

"J'avance masquée" (*larvatus prodeio*) was Descartes' motto, and the title of a novel Georges Perec planned and never wrote. As David Bellos, also Perec's translator, writes in this enormously enjoyable and enlightening biography, it could equally well have been the author's own. The face is familiar enough: benign, sly and a bit dotty, with its shock of hair, warts, sticky-out ears and wayward goatee. Jane Birkin told him he looked like Professor Branestawm.

But for all the clues scattered throughout his work, encrypted and encoded or turned into jokes, the man himself always remains out of reach. As he put it in *W or the Memory of Childhood*, the closest he came to autobiography, he was "like a child playing hide-and-seek, who doesn't know what he fears or wants more: to stay hidden, or to be found".

Georges Perec was born into a family of Polish Jews in Paris on 7 March 1936—a year later and the date would have been palindromic—and died in 1982. His surname, pronounced "Peretz" in Polish despite its Breton appearance, ultimately means "Gap" or "Gapman", but can also be linked, phonetically and with a few twists of folk etymology, to the word "pretzel". Perec's father was killed by invading Germans in 1940, his mother died in Auschwitz in 1943. Georges was brought up by his uncle, a pearl merchant who rescued Simone de Beauvoir during the

fall of Paris, and a succession of aunts. As the survivors of the Final Solution had such difficulty in obtaining official recognition of the loss of their loved ones, Bellos writes, "their grieving could have no formal beginning." Another gap, and an endless one.

The young Perec, from his years in a rural boarding school to his adolescence in Paris, is extremely winning: rather ugly and with rotten teeth from early tuberculosis, dreamy, shy, a bit of a joker but otherwise unremarkable. In school, he came last in philosophy, didn't do much better in French. He dropped out of his history degree. When thwarted, or drunk, he would adopt the posture—arms hanging, head tilting, eyes squinting upwards—of Christ in Grünewald's altarpiece.

He was not successful with women—the warts and teeth didn't help much. Evenings were spent in jazz clubs. After one such, he and a friend were driven up and down the empty Champs Élysées by the Harlem Globetrotters in a fleet of pink cadillacs.

Then came a couple of drunken trips to Yugoslavia in search of love; a stint as a market researcher—apparently a left-wing job in 1950s Paris—and a first marriage. Knowing now that he wanted to write a rival to *Moby Dick* in scope, he kept himself for a number of years typing and devising card retrieval systems in a research laboratory, where he devoted himself to pranksterism. A nightmarishly creative typist, he inscribed, in English, the following epigram on a colleague's CV: "The one who thinks that one will one day elucidate the sophisticated in-trication of the nervous machinery, is fouring himself a finger in the eye until the elbow." John Carew ECCLES."

Success came fleetingly with *Things*, misrecognised as a satire on 1960s materialism. It won him the Prix Renaudot and a spot of exposure, followed by a retreat into prolific semi-obscure in a ghastly-sounding artists' community. By now Perec was involved with OuLiPo, "Ouvroir de littérature potentielle", the group around Raymond Queneau devoted to the imposition of rigorous artificial constraints on the writing process.

In Perec's case this yielded both a palindrome 500 words long in both directions and *La Disparition*, the famous novel without the letter "E" which Roland Barthes refused to read. But OuLiPo also fed into the structure of Perec's vast jigsaw-puzzle of a masterpiece, *Life: a user's manual*.

The pattering principle behind this delightful and unsettling novel, ostensibly an inventory of the rooms in a Paris building, is mind-boggling. Bellos—who often uses Perec's own distinctive cadences—movingly shows that the gaps running through the novel, right through to its final, insoluble puzzle (X shaped hole, W shaped piece) deliberately echo the gaps in Perec's own life: his name, his family history, the loss of his mother.

On Perec's own attitude to memory, much can be gleaned from the elusive fragments in *W or the Memory of Childhood*. But one might also consider, in *Life: a user's manual*, the visiting card: "Madeleine Proust, 'Souvenirs'".

Local hero

THE SHIPPING NEWS
E Annie Proulx
Fourth Estate, £14.99

Roz Kaveney

Novels of small-town life are an American genre that continually generates fine work. For a society obsessed with individual identity, America has a surprising love of those virtues that emerge only in a collective context. A British novel about returning to roots would be a theodicy, re-establishing hierarchies and fitting the protagonists into their preordained rank. But the best American novels of return show people creating, rather than finding, the niche that best fulfills them.

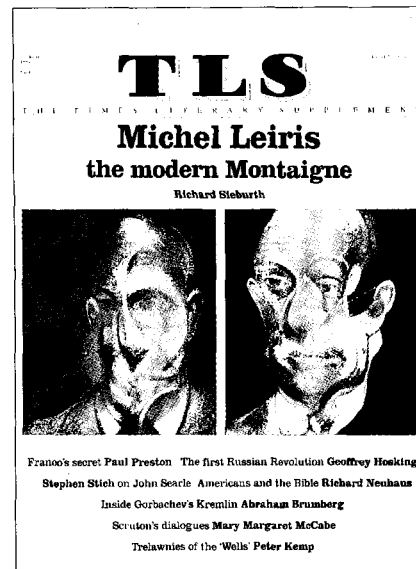
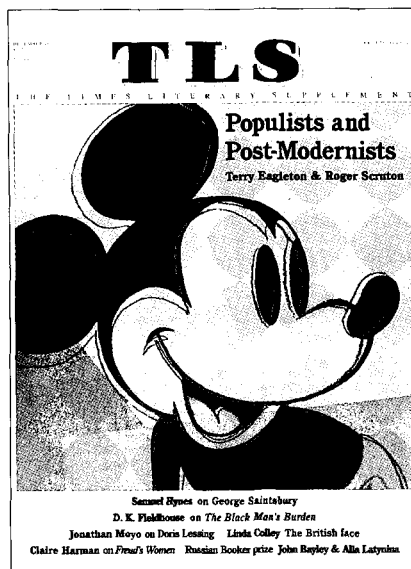
E Annie Proulx's lumbering hero Quoye was never much liked by his parents or siblings. He married Petal, who humiliated him with affairs, and has only become a halfway competent journalist because his best friend Partridge saw potential in him. When his parents die, he loses his job, and Petal dies in a car crash after selling their children to a child abuser, from whom they are retrieved physically untouched. Quoye is open to suggestions about how he should endure the rest of his life, and his aunt drags him off to the family roots in Newfoundland.

It will already be apparent that Proulx is not above throwing in the odd extreme. What follows includes storms at sea, premonitory dreams, decapitations, rescues and the resuscitation of a drowned man during his own wake. Perhaps even more improbably, the battered Quoye acquires genuine dignity and worth by hard work at a job that he learns to love—turning the shipping news of a small local paper into a column taken seriously by other journalists.

Proulx's triumph is that she makes us swallow all of this. Her work not only describes, but is imbued with, a chancy decency that looks us forthright in the eye and challenges disbelief. This is an artful novel. Proulx takes us to a land of myth—Quoye is at one level the Holy Fool who does not know how to ask the right questions—and urban legend, full of the things we want or fear to believe in.

What risks being mere whimsy has steel behind it, because there is passion here and a real potential for tragedy. Petal died and was horrid, for all that Quoye tried to love her. One of editor Buggit's sons drowned and the other is obsessed with the sea even though he has nearly drowned once. Aunt Agnes lost her woman lover years ago to cancer and does not feel able to tell even Quoye about it.

There is precise intelligence, a sense of how small communities work and of how power is divided within them. Quoye grows into responsibility because there is a vacuum in the community that needs him to fill it. The chapter heads come from a catalogue of knots: Proulx has the good sense not to avoid this potential crudity in her description of the ties that bind her hero to happiness.



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Home front

CONFUSION
Elizabeth Jane Howard
Macmillan, £14.99

Judy Cooke

The Cazalet family saga has reached its third volume, which covers the years from Pearl Harbour to the end of the war. New readers could begin here. The themes and characters are well established and the implications of peace beginning to emerge. The persuasive melancholy of the narrative foreshadows the discoveries of 1945: Belsen, Dachau.

Edward Cazalet, the eldest son, is rarely affected by others. He sees the new order as an opportunity to downgrade his London establishment, perhaps to ditch his wife, Villy, and to set up house with his mistress, Diana, and their child. Zoë, whose husband Rupert, the third son, left for Dunkirk during her pregnancy, has to face the fact that he may now be dead. Her lover, Jack, a Jewish American reporter attached to the army, begs her to share his future—but neither can anticipate Jack's mission to the camps and his reaction to the first intimations of the Holocaust.

As in the first two volumes, women's experience is presented as being wholly reactive. This war story is almost entirely theirs. The three generations meet emotional and physical challenges as their temperament and circumstance dictate. Rachel, the only Cazalet daughter, takes it for granted that her love for another woman, Margot Sidney, (Sid) must be clandestine, and subservient to the needs of her own family. Angela, a younger cousin whose abortion knocks her off course, sleeps around unhappily enough in the enforced hedonism of the Blitz.

What is so extraordinarily deft is the author's ability to focus on that moment when public and private concerns are brought to bear upon each other. For instance, there's the scene at the family home in Sussex, when Zoë returns from a walk with her children to find Jack, her lover, there; and her mother-in-law, the formidable Duchy, entirely sympathetic at this critical juncture. Jack has brought devastating news. A tray with glasses and whisky is discreetly placed in the hall to cushion the blow.

Comparisons have been made between the Cazalets and the Forsytes. There is certainly a depth of suffering in the relationship between young Louise, Edward's daughter, and the egotistical Michael Hadleigh to rival anything between Galsworthy's nastiest customer, Soames Forsyte, and his wife Irene. In Louise's case, it is her fear of her father's sexuality and the sense of her mother's acute dislike that persuade her into an early marriage. There she finds her existence dominated by a possessive mother-in-law, the poisonous Lady Zinnia.

Elizabeth Jane Howard has always been brilliant at portraying Louise's dilemma. *The Long View*, one of her best novels, deals with

just such a marriage. However, I would guess that a character even closer to her heart is Clary, Rupert's daughter, whose journal to her absent father suggests a budding writer beginning in the 1940s: just one of the possibilities to look forward to in volume four.

Left uplift

THE HUMPHREY JENNINGS FILM READER
Kevin Jackson (editor)
Carcaret, £25

Robert Carver

The old wartime Crown Film Unit favoured a sentimental-heroic depiction of *Our Island Race*, a curious blend of misty-eyed patriotism, lyric poetry and parlour-pink workerist iconography. Staffed by Cambridge-educated middle-class idealists, it turned out low-key, humanist propaganda documentaries of a more or less social-realist nature. The surrealist painter, poet and critic Humphrey Jennings was almost certainly the most talented of the unit's directors.

Fires Were Started, about the fire service during the Blitz, and *The Silent Village*—an imaginative reconstruction of the Nazi destruction of Lidice, shot in a Welsh mining community—can both still be watched today. That is more than you can say for most wartime propaganda.

This collection of Jennings' documentary film scripts, notes, letters to his wife (a refugee in America), poems, critical writings and BBC broadcasts builds into a pen-portrait of the man and the period. Serious-minded, moralistic, a transparently good egg, Jennings managed to be both engaging and ingenuous. You will search these pages in vain for the ironic, the unconventional, even for humour. Jennings represents the Cambridge intellectual at his most socially conscious and inspirational, heavy on the uplift.

The letters to his wife are extraordinarily passionless. They are still the best thing in this anthology, for their deadpan descriptions of filming and viewing rushes while the Blitz went on around the crew. The film material is less successful. WH Auden's apocryphal dialogue, "See this worker oil his study tool", supposedly penned for a Crown Film Unit documentary finds a risible echo in the Jennings' oeuvre. My favourite is from *Fires Were Started*: "You've been a long time polishing that chopper of yours, Sid", says a docker to his mate, at work cleaning an axe.

It is curious, though, to enter a mental world where film is something you do and make rather than theorise about. In Jennings' day, intellectualisation was reserved for English poetry. A closely printed, seven-page *TLS* review on just one book also concentrates the mind on how other priorities have changed.

The key issues for the left make a strange contrast to our own era. Then it was all solidarity with Russia. "second front now",

"pulling together as one nation". Jennings can talk about "nigger minstrels" without embarrassment and remark on "the tireless womenfolk" who dutifully cook and iron and wash for their men. Of gender and race, not a trace. "A deeply suspect character," growled a PC film-studies type. Such is the fate of those who are so abreast of the times that their passing leaves them beached and gasping.

"England's Leni Riefenstahl" is a pretty backhanded compliment, but it does alas fit Jennings. Except, of course, that the devil always has the best tunes, and Riefenstahl's films are more seductive and dangerous than Jennings or his like could ever be. The cosiness factor, as so often in English art, fatally weakens the result. Jennings' own surrealist paintings have a faintly embarrassed air of pastiche. The international Surrealist movement expelled him when he accepted an OBE: officer, gentleman and well-meaning radical.

Ironically, you can now find his films in the shops at London's Imperial War Museum, where the video displays what was once propaganda as £9.99 Blitz theme-park charm. Yet it is moving to see those great ships thunder down Clydeside launchways, the Churchill tanks forged out of glowing furnaces, men sweating, working and making: images of a Britain now as lost to us as those of the Middle Ages. Nostalgia, too, for a world where a poet and a cameraman could go out alone and shoot a picture in the Blitz that would then be shown and admired in cinemas all over the world.

Jennings' sudden, accidental death in Greece in 1950 puts a full stop to an era and a style. "The only poet the British cinema has produced," claims Lindsay Anderson. It's hard to disagree, except perhaps to query the quality of the poetry.

Low horizons

DE VALERA: LONG FELLOW, LONG SHADOW
Tim Pat Coogan

Hutchinson, £20

THE LAUREL AND THE IVY: THE STORY OF CHARLES STEWART PARNELL AND IRISH NATIONALISM

Robert Kee

Hamish Hamilton, £20

Maurice Walsh

There is a scene in Tim Pat Coogan's excellent, irreverent biography of Eamon De Valera in which De Valera's son, Vivion, stands in at a public meeting in Dublin following his father's arrest by the forces of the new Irish Free State in 1923. Vivion, who was then 13, fought off an asthma attack to read from a script: "My father promised he would speak to you here today and he is a man who would keep his word if he could. But he cannot speak to you for *giollai na nGall* seized him in County Clare the other day . . . I know not

"The Barrel Man" (1912), from T G Rosenthal's comprehensive book on independent Ireland's greatest painter, "The Art of Jack B Yeats" (André Deutsch, £30)

what they will do with him... But they cannot kill the spirit of freedom in Ireland."

I can hear every cadence of Vivion's defiant speech. They were reproduced constantly at parades and from wooden stages in small parish halls in Eamon De Valera's Ireland for more than 50 years afterwards. De Valera's Ireland was a place where 13 year olds or their younger brothers obeyed their fathers and mimicked their big talk to ward off any threats to their own notions of Irishness.

And then there is that phrase *giollai na nGall*. It means gillies or servants of the foreigner. Its harsh and dismissive sound suggests a particularly stupid and despicable kind of servant: a wide-eyed, weak-kneed stooge of the English. It was readily used to ridicule anybody not regarded as being truly Irish. Tim Pat Coogan writes that De Valera's key role in the split over the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921 and the civil war that followed set Ireland's course in bitterness and small horizons. And the echoes of that bitterness and its small horizons are contained in the interstices of Vivion's speech.

But there is still that lofty sentence at the end: "They cannot kill the spirit of freedom in Ireland." It has a strange, visceral appeal, beyond the cynicism of the small horizons. And it is rhetoric that was the essence of De Valera's mythological twin, Parnell, who gloriously failed to win Home Rule for Ireland more than a quarter of a century before De Valera fought the British in 1916.

Robert Kee writes that reminiscences of Parnell are those of people aware that they were dealing with a myth in the making. He presents a vivid picture of Parnell travelling the country, addressing crowds that gathered to meet him at draughty railway stations in the middle of the night, on his way to becoming the uncrowned king of Ireland. But it was De Valera, with a hungry appreciation of power that Coogan so meticulously describes, who ended up with the crown.

Besides their romantic nationalism and their skilful avoidance of the problem of all those Protestants in the north east, there was little in common between Parnell and De Valera. Parnell was an indebted landlord from a half-American family with all the arrogance of his class, and that touch of dangerous eccentricity as well. The Parnells, said one of his followers, are a little off their nut. The defining relationship of his life was the affair with Mrs Katherine O'Shea that precipitated his downfall. Michael Davitt described him as an Englishman of the strongest type moulded for an Irish purpose.

De Valera was almost certainly illegitimate, sent from New York by his mother to be brought up on a small farm in Bruree, County Limerick, so poor that he had to spend hours grazing the cattle by the roadside. He grew up to be a stern teacher, admired by the nuns for his manly piety. Coogan identifies the violence and servility of rural life as essential



to his personality. "He subsumed the violence into his own entourage and turned the servility to account to depict him as the embodiment of asexual, moralistic, free Ireland."

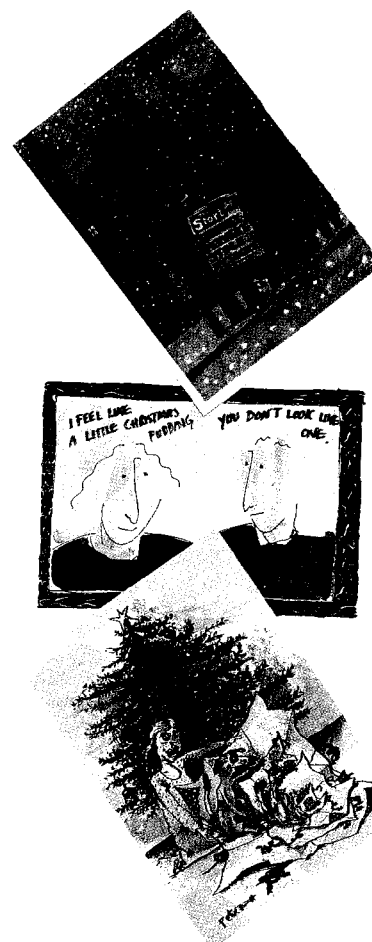
Parnell never achieved his life's dream of Home Rule. As Robert Kee describes in riveting detail, he effectively destroyed any hope of it by refusing to stand aside, even temporarily, after the sensation of the O'Shea divorce case. But the movement he led transformed Ireland's Catholic farmers from tenants to proprietors. And it was this social structure on which De Valera depended for his monopoly of power in Ireland.

In 1939, one of De Valera's most trusted allies argued against the introduction of children's allowances. His grounds were that they would undermine parental authority: "Without the firm exercise of such authority a peasant economy such as ours, based upon the patriarchal principle, cannot exist."

The story of a revolutionary elite settling into post-colonial power is a common 20th-century tale. But it's painful to achieve more than a mere intellectual realisation that a version of this happened in Ireland. The powerful romance of Ireland as a special place has lingered long after the promise faded.

Parnell's name has helped romance to survive the cries of his one-time colleagues that Kitty O'Shea was a convicted British prostitute. Frugality and simplicity were part of the De Valera romance, and although they often translated into poverty and small horizons, it is difficult to let the ideal go entirely. De Valera settled in a big house in a nice district of Dublin and his family inherited the newspaper company he had established with funds originally raised in America for the cause of Irish freedom. But to many people living on small farms without medical services and running water, whose sons and daughters left for jobs in Boston or Kilburn, De Valera's demeanour as an Irish hero on the world stage still counted as a symbol of

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achievement. At JFK's funeral, he moved like "a huge heron in a high wind".

While Parnell's failure still has rich potential as myth, De Valera's success created both a myth and a living reality. Coogan has separated them with relish. "Rain, God, graves, the Irish language and De Valera: these were the five fingers of a fist that maintained and symbolised a man, an era, a culture."

Many people are still afraid of tampering with this overpowering notion of Irish identity. But it is being transformed anyway by the impersonal power of the global economy. Without examination, there will be no identity at all.

Irish secrets

SAFE IN THE KITCHEN

Aisling Foster

Hamish Hamilton, £14.99

THE CONSEQUENCE

Colbert Kearney

Blackstaff Press, £8.95

Patricia Craig

Two first novels by Irish writers, both skilful and both centred on a memorable device. Aisling Foster takes the jewels of the Romanovs—a few of them at any rate—and places them in the kitchen of a house in a Dublin suburb. Part of her plan is to account for the location of these valuables in such an unlikely spot, but she's also concerned to elaborate the other implications of her title.

In the first place, *are* the jewels safe in the kitchen, in their specially constructed safe? Not entirely, any more than their custodian Rita O'Fiaich, wife of an ex-gunman-turned politician, can be safely relegated to the same domestic sphere. Rita, born in 1900 to a "Castle Catholic" family, had discovered Irish nationalism as a schoolgirl and threw in her lot with a man who embodies the unadulterated Gael: Frank Fee, later O'Fiaich. Idealism quickly sours as Rita grasps what "Irishness" entails: a lack of charm, resistance to all things foreign, knee-jerk Catholicism, Gaelic League fundamentalism. She has, in short, married a bigot and a boor.

Rita, who brings the jewels to Ireland sewn into her knickers after a fundraising tour of America and the short-lived convergence of two revolutionary outfits, Irish and Russian, lets the things assume more and more of a hold over her imagination—not least because they're associated in her mind with a never-to-be-repeated lesbian fling. While everything else turns to dust and ashes—marriage, children, the new Irish state—they alone contribute brightness to her days.

She schemes to get them out of the safe and occasionally into public display, with all the qualms and addictiveness of a woman in the throes of an affair. Her husband, when he isn't closeted with Dev or otherwise engaged in shaping the new nation, prefers to conduct his

conversations with the cook.

What Aisling Foster does in this lively novel is to highlight the dangers of an insular, authoritarian mentality, always defining itself in po-faced opposition to something else: Irish piety good, English decadence bad, and so on. It's the kind of mentality that wants to eradicate the past, rather than attempting to assimilate it with the present. All the great houses of Ireland should be razed to the ground, says the O'Fiaichs' cook, because they remind the people of oppression. No place here for any kind of grace or complexity. The author's other achievement is to show what a couple of generations of Irishwomen had to contend with, by creating one of the most rebarbative husbands in recent fiction.

Frank O'Fiaich is the kind of *Gaeilgeoir* who got enthusiasm for the language a bad name. Fortunately, however, his brand of holy-water chauvinism wasn't the whole picture. You could bring a liberal-minded, scholarly appreciativeness to the language and its possibilities—as did, for example, the teacher and poet Eoghan O Tuairisc (Eugene Watters), a real-life character who appears in Colbert Kearney's *The Consequence*.

This novel is over-elaborate; it doesn't quite hold together and it's hard to see its point (though not, to be sure, that it's making one, or several). Does it all boil down to the difficulty of disentangling fact from fiction? If so, it approaches this truism in an extraordinarily roundabout way. Along the line, however, come so many striking set-pieces that the critic is disarmed.

Fintan Kearney, a lecturer at Cork University, doesn't have trouble with his memory except in one important respect. A novel by him, called *Gone the Time* and apparently dealing with his experiences as a Dublin student in the 1960s, has been wiped out of his consciousness. He has no recollection of having written it, or of what it contains. Everyone else knows about it, but not Fintan.

The amnesiac author picks up a hint that he might not have done full justice to a character in the novel, his teacher Eugene Watters. As a gesture of amendment, the second half of the narrative—Colbert Kearney's narrative, not Fintan Kearney's—consists of three memoirs of exorbitant Dublin characters of the 1960s. There's Fintan's garrulous Uncle Pearse; Eugene Watters, whose uproarious pedagogy enlivened many a class at St Fergal's Boys' National School; and the arch-Dubliners whose life resolved itself into a succession of anecdotes: Brendan Behan, a relative of both the author and the narrator.

Is Colbert Kearney having a go at the spate of memoirs of embroidered Dublin days? Does he mean to imply that authenticity in a "memoir" needn't depend on first-hand experience? What's certain is that he takes a playful approach to the shaping of fiction—and of myth or moonshine, come to that. The parts don't quite cohere and it has moments of pretentiousness. Once he gets into his stride, though, Kearney shows himself to be inventive and fluent. In the end, you have to judge *The Consequence* a very accomplished performance.

PRINTOUT

All too human

Boyd Tonkin

In his salutary book *'The Politics of Cultural Despair'*, the historian Fritz Stern examined those paranoid windbags and tinpot seers in Germany who acted as a bridge between Nietzsche and the doctrines of the Third Reich. "They sought a breakthrough to the past," he wrote, "a new community in which old ideas and institutions would once again command universal allegiance."

I went back to Stern after reading *"Humanism: the wreck of western culture"*, written by the Australian sociologist John Carroll and published by Fontana (£6.99) in its "Movements and Ideas" series. Don't be misled by the format: this is no students' guide but a hair-raisingly vicious polemic against the legacy of the Renaissance, liberalism and modernity. Carroll aims to arouse "disgust" at humanist culture (which he sees as an unburied corpse) and at the rootless, godless art and thought it breeds.

He does so via a set of brilliant, partisan sketches of major works from Donatello to Freud. In a jacket puff, Zygmunt Bauman calls Carroll "original". He is not; anyone acquainted with the bilious tradition of European reaction since Burke and de Maistre will recognise these tunes. In England, we meet this hatred of modern freedom largely through the softer Anglican shadings of a C S Lewis or a T S Eliot.

But for all his bracing lucidity, Carroll is profoundly Germanic; hence the relevance of those Nietzschean epigones. In fact, he appears as a prophet of doom straight out of the '90s—the 1890s—whose sole excursion into our time is a paean to some Westerns of John Ford. "It is rare almost to the point of uniqueness in the 20th century to see a work that is without a trace of decadence," he writes of *"Rio Grande"*. If you can stomach such sentences, you will admire this book.

Whose cause does Carroll serve? Unlike his Nietzschean forebears, he doesn't slide into anti-democratic rant—although he despises equality. It would be easy to nail him as a Christian apologist of Catholic slant: he adores the "sacred communities" of Poussin's paintings. But he also reveres the Protestant quest for faith through guilt, even in the form of Kierkegaard's "dread, distress and paradox". Only myth or dogma can save us from the "demonic forces" unleashed by reason and science, to give drifting humanity a safe "place to stand".

Yet he does not write like a sure believer. His prose reveals an undertow of violence and an utter lack of charity. In its swingeing and vehement way, this diatribe is a coded self-portrait of the embittered intellectual at our own fin-de-siècle. Carroll pounces on "nihilism" wherever he finds it. But, twisted by scorn for the secular hopes and works of his fellow-beings, he comes across as the one true nihilist. The skull he always sees in the mirror of our culture is his own.

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Within the European Community

17th & 18th December 1993
Royal Holloway & Bedford New College

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Michael Burgess, Andrew Cox, Kathleen Dragoo, Gregory Jones
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Further information from:

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A wide-ranging debate on the current situation in Northern Ireland which will cover the main themes of Anglo-Irish relations, the inter-party talks, the Hume-Adams talks, the Opsahl report

**Tuesday 14 December 7.30pm, Room
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EOGHAN HARRIS

Irish political commentator, adviser in Mary Robinson's election campaign

MARIANNE ELLIOTT

Professor of History and representing the Opsahl Commission's Citizens Inquiry into ways forward for Northern Ireland

HENRY ROBINSON

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Nearest tube, Westminster. Please allow 10 minutes to pass through security.

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In last week's New Statesman you read an edited extract from Stuart Hall's 'Moving On' lecture.
Now the full edited transcript is available.



by **Stuart Hall**

Professor of Sociology at the Open University

Just £2 per copy (incs p&p)

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Stuart Hall spoke to some 600 people at London's Conway Hall last month at Democratic Left's 'Moving On' event. He talked of the need for a profound new vision of how people should live together to counteract the Tories 'Back to Basics' policies. Stuart Hall brought up to date his thinking about Thatcherism and 'Majorism'.

The event was sponsored by The New Statesman, Pluto Press and New Times.

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POSTGRADUATE, lefty woman (38), divorced with two children, attractive and independent, seeks the company of an unattached, intelligent, good humoured man for the rediscovery of the finer things in life. (West Yorks.) Please write to Box (142) 725.

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GENTLEMAN, YOUTHFUL MID-SIXTIES, seeks younger companion, understanding, non-smoking, non-TV addict. Interests/activities, music, oriental philosophy, gardening, walking, fine arts, good food. Fife/Edinburgh area. Please write Box (141) 719.

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ATTRACTIVE, TALLISH, GRADUATE WOMAN, young 43, emotional, caring, enjoys theatre, reading, travel, good food, seeks company of n/s, non-sexist, intelligent man (38-50) with view to lasting relationship. London area. Write with photo to Box (140) 714.

OXFORD BASED MAN (28), balding, bearded, bespectacled, big-eared, seeks smart, cuddly n/s feminist (25ish-30-ish) for pizza, friendship. Likes books, music, guitars, France. Brains essential. Looks a bonus. Please write to Box (140) 715.

EDUCATED, DECENT, HUMOROUS MAN, having reached middle age without family, intends to remedy this. In good condition, financially secure (not rich), affectionate, unattached, currently London, but relocatable. Any ladies (maybe mothers already) interested? Please write to Box (140) 716.

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WORLD-WIDE out-of-print service founded 1948. Phone 081-876 7254 (24-hours). Hammersmith Books, High Street, London SW13 9LR.

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WHAT IS FASCISM? WHAT IS DEMOCRACY? WHAT IS GENOCIDE? Pamphlet by Paul Pawlowski. Price £1 from The Oliver Cromwell Republican Party of England, 44 Water Street, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 6QZ.

Personal

ALICE MILLER: Any artist who has been influenced by her writings and would like to communicate with others, write to Box (142) 723.

F(RANCES) W(ORSLEY) STELLA BROWNE (1880-1955), feminist, socialist, journalist, translator, founder of ALRA: any information about life, career, associates, location of papers concerning, for biographical study. Dr Lesley Hall, 76 Tytherton Road, London N19 4QA.

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ENDGAMES: Weekend Competition

No 3305 Set by Tim Hopkins

We wondered how a famous
children's author of your choice
would cope with writing an adult
novel.

Report by Ms de Meaner

A mixed bag. Most of you took
"adult" to be synonymous with
"about sex". But there were the
few rebels, like Jenny
Zass-Ogilvie's filth-free version
of *Pride and Prejudice* by Roger
Hargreaves (of pop-up fame):

Mrs Fixit was all agog.

Nevertell Park had a new
owner. His name was Mr Bungle,
and he was a bachelor.

"Aha!" said Mrs Fixit, "he must
need a wife!"

She woke her husband. "You
must go and see him," she
ordered, "and invite him to tea.
He will do nicely for one of our
girls!"

Poor Mr Fixit. He didn't want
to go at all. But she pushed him
out of the house,
and down the road,
and up the long, winding lane to
Nevertell Park.

Then she rushed home to get
the tea . . . and so on.

Hmm. Perhaps sex *is* a
necessary ingredient, after all. In
fact the only exception I allowed
to this was Hazel Stanley's
Beatrix Potter, where "adult"
meant "doleful and dreary". I can
see that. The others who were
banned were those of an
over-enthusiastic nature, like
Nicholas Murray, whose
foul-mouthed Alice barely uttered
a word that was not profane:
"motherfucker", "asshole", "So
long, sucker." Well, really!

A tenner to the winners, plus an
extra five to Hall and Herbertson.

NB: If any prize winners would
like to come to the Christmas
Party on 9 December (invitation
only and no riff-raff), would they
please write to/ring me and ask
for an invite, and I shall post it
forthwith.

The Tale of Mr Proust by Beatrix Potter

Mr Proust lived in a dark house
with his walls all covered with
cork because everything made
him sneeze. He hardly ever went
out except to see his friends who
were all Counts and Dukes and
even Princes and Princesses. But
they were not very nice to him
and he would sneeze and go back

to his little cork room and stay
there. When he wanted to remind
himself what had happened he
dipped a little cake in his tea and
then he could remember. Then he
would write down in his little
book everything his friends had
said and done and what the
weather was like and soon it
came to be a very long, very dull
book.

Hazel Stanley

(Richmal Crompton)

"I'm surprised you got into
Oxford, William. I mean your
family aren't rich and clever like
mine. How did you manage it?"

"Exam technique, Violet
Elizabeth—a bogus broken arm
and my crib sheets in the sling."

"What a horrid cheat you are!"

"And you're reading
psychology?"

"Oh, yes—it's super: it tells you
all about how people's minds
work."

"Really," said William, not
altogether convinced. "Well, I'm
an economics man. I want my
degree to work for me when I
leave this dump."

"William! Don't be so rude—
and on the subject of rudeness. I
believe you attempted to have sex
with me last night . . ."

"Not attempted—succeeded. I
shall ever think of it as VE night!"

"But I distinctly remember
saying 'no' . . ."

"But you said 'yes' before
that . . ."

"Well, Mummy's best friend is
a solicitor and you'll get sent to
prison for *raping me*!"

"Sorry, Violet Elizabeth, but I've
got your consent on video . . ."

"Then you must have my
refusal, too . . ."

"Ah, bit of a technical
hitch—before your refusal the
video appears to have been
switched off by remote control."

"William Brown, I hate you! I
hate you! I hate you! I hate you!"

David C Hall

(Frank Richards)

"I say, you chaps—"

"Goodbye."

"But—"

"Go and eat coke."

"Oh, crikey—"

"Out, you low bouncer."

"Really, Horton. I just—"

"Gammon."

"All I wanted to ask was—"

"And close the door behind
you."

"Look here, you fellows,"
roared Bunter, "all I wanted to
ask was—can I borrow some of

GRYPH'S QUIZ

The answers all have
something in common

1. Steady
2. Lumber
3. Wedding partner
4. Pair of Indian cities
5. Piece
6. Shrivels
7. Frog or toad
8. Twenty make a monkey
9. Killed by Rikki-Tikki-Tavi
10. Supplementary corollary

Answers overleaf

your condoms? Only there's a
girl in my flat. I'll pay you back.
I'm . . . er . . . expecting a giro
cheque tomorrow morning."

The Infamous Five exchanged
glances, and chuckled merrily.

Bump bump bump
Strange sounds were coming
from the flat above where the
Infamous Five were sprawled out
on the floor, smoking crack.

Bump bump bump. Bump!

"Yaroooh!"

"That'll be Bunter!" ejaculated
Nutent into a crisp packet. "He's
climaxed."

"Either that or he's discovered
the sand we put in with the
condoms."

And the five merry fellows
chuckled heartily.

"Pass me some more Copydex.
This bag's dead."

Simon Herbertson

Lolita by Richmal Crompton
Violet Elizabeth didn't like Mrs
Haze's daughter.

"What a stoopid name," she
complained. "Whoever heard of a
girl being called Low."

"I would have preferred High,"
agreed Ginger.

"It's short for something else,"
snapped William, who only that
morning had shown his new
neighbour the way to the shops.

"Short for what?" asked Henry.

"Lo-lee-ta," exulted William.

"That's not a proper name,"
cried Violet Elizabeth.

But William didn't mind. He
had puzzled, like any ignorant
schoolboy, about the mystery of
the tiny, coloured piece of
clothing he'd spied on Mrs
Haze's washing-line. And not
understanding what they were,
asked Lo-lee-ta over the garden
wall.

"They're my briefs," she
explained. Then lifting her skirt
showed how the pink one she
was wearing was fitted between

her slim, brown thighs.

"Crumbs."

"You can take them off if you want," she offered, smiling. Suddenly, William felt decidedly queer as though he'd had too many helpings of chocolate pudding.

"Crumbs," he muttered, running into the house to hide a crimson face. Now, all he could think of were those wispy briefs and Lo-lee-ta's downy legs and wondered until his head hurt what he would find if he really did take them off.

Connie Yapp

(A A Milne)

"Hullo, Christopher," I began as usual.

"Hullo."

"I've been looking at your case notes, Christopher, trying to understand why you did it."

"We just wanted to dig a hole in the woods."

"We?"

"Me and my friends."

"But there are no friends, Christopher. They're just fantasy. These friends you invented, now, why were they all males?"

"They just were."

"Are you afraid of girls, Christopher? Do you think about girls a lot? Were you thinking about girls when you decided to dig a hole?"

"Don't know how to dig anything else."

"And when the little girls fell into the hole, did you know that what you did to them was wrong?"

"Didn't do anything."

"You have to face up to it, Christopher. You killed them and then you ate them, didn't you?"

"Course I didn't, silly."

"But we found the bones, Christopher."

"It wasn't me did that. That was Robin."

Noel Petty

No 3308 Set by Jasper Heywood

We want a review (200 words max) of *next year's* Turner Prize winner, explaining its deep significance (or not, depending on which camp you're in). In by 16 December.

Quiz answers

"The Jungle Book"
10) Rider; Note: 9) Kipling's
7) Paddock; 8) Pony; 9) Nag;
4) Jodhpurs; 5) Bit; 6) Withers;
1) Stable; 2) Saddle; 3) Groom;
All are equestrian terms.

Salamanca 202: "Quite A Quota"

Copies of the Collins Concise English Dictionary for the first three correct entries opened. Entries to Salamanca 202, New Statesman & Society, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, by Monday 13 December.

Certain clued answers are entered with one letter changed, the letter change provided by a crossing answer, still making a real word (including proper names) other than that clued. A group of normal answers clued with no definitions provides a paraphrase of a quotation (ODQ) whose author may be made by the new letters of the above. It is hoped most solvers do the quotation in its proper form (six words) and will therefore include it with their solutions.

ACROSS

- 1 Dress hat-rig-equipment of Scot (6) ...
- 5 ... that's let out-puzzle for Burns (6)
- 9 Milton's shrub fellow planted in turned earth (7)
- 12 Noble canal taken by Stevenson (shortly)? (4)
- 13 Horribly chronic (hot, not cold) sounds in the stethoscope (7) ...
- 14 ... it's Shelley's broken instrument (6)
- 15 A smallish piece of Wordsworth issued (4)
- 16 See one kinsman described by a Wilder line (9)
- 20 Austen's first, written in haste (6)
- 22 Buchan's gullies containing my rats (6)
- 26 Sword belt-rigid help for Service? (9)
- 27 Song from Carmen, say, with religious content (4)
- 28 A frank confession from AA, say (6)
- 31 Incorrectly interpret "Fairacre" author, we hear (7)
- 32 What do you bet you'll find this in Alighieri? (4)
- 33 Result of a squint we had round Carey's street (7)
- 34 Blaise-namely one Prince Albert captured (6)
- 35 Bone-scraper to axe middle spare tyres (6)

DOWN

- 1 Talking an awful lot of s—, note, in a crowd (7)
- 2 Line first cut by skater's leap (4)
- 3 Word with changed ending, unused by the posh (Ross) (4)
- 4 Revolutionaries, note, in funny story (skit) (11)

- 5 Marginal note initially kindled by the short headings in book (Hebrew) (6)
- 6 Assayers—they try old coins (change from streets) (7)
- 7 Given a dowry (by Fraser) to alter the decor (8)
- 8 The Spanish male lives with English/French girl (5)
- 10 Join again with King in hugging old Queen (7)
- 11 Dog burying posh turned-up jeans in a deceitful way (11)
- 13 With which Lapps control rare deer? (4)
- 17 Lot is composed for absorption by power players (8)
- 18 Totally fit on the outside is cold inside? That's an erroneous notion (7)
- 19 Language used by chairman meandering endlessly (7)
- 21 He'll give up striving direly to retain energy (7)
- 23 Lie spread in sun, wrap carelessly thrown over middle of belly (6)
- 24 Plant which adapts, given an unlimited period of years? (4)
- 25 Knife's to spoil resin used in varnish (5)
- 29 Paintings of heads or impressionist landscapes, say? (4)
- 30 Sun's hot in Scotland—it's close in some other places. (4)

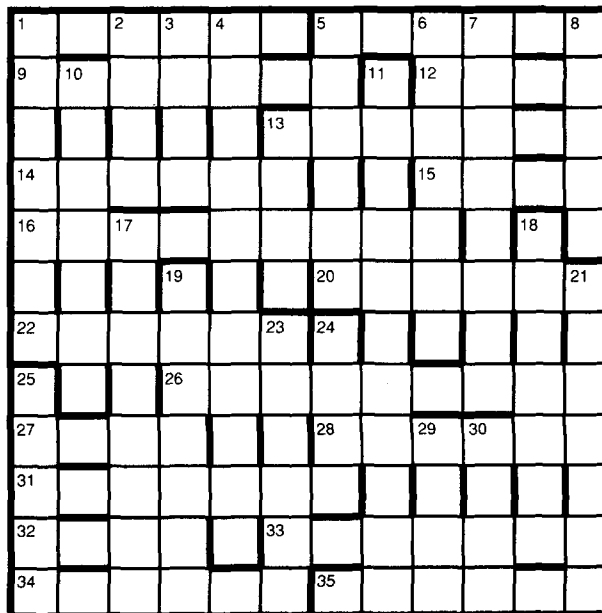
Solution to Salamanca 200

Puzzle title: Butterfly Fish

W	O	B	E	G	O	N	G	T	R	O	T
H	A	R	M	I	N	E	O	O	U	P	H
I	T	A	B	B	E	R	L	I	N	E	R
F	L	E	A	E	N	S	O	L	U	M	E
B	O	U	R	R	E	E	M	S	P	R	A
O	G	Y	G	E	S	I	N	O	S	E	D
A	U	T	O	G	S	S	K	R	I	M	P
L	E	D	A	A	L	E	A	K	I	E	R
E	A	D	D	T	O	G	G	T	O	N	S
V	E	L	A	T	U	R	A	A	E	T	A
I	C	E	R	A	D	I	D	I	C	O	I
N	U	R	S	S	U	M	U	L	L	E	T

Prizewinners for Salamanca 200

K Whitfield, Newcastle upon Tyne
G Jones, Hitchin
S Shaw, Manchester



“Another rich bastard is to be closed down, despite having appeared on the government’s list of ‘reprieved’ rich bastards only a year ago. Management blames a failure of demand, caused by shrinking markets in an increasingly competitive environment.”

With these words on a radio news bulletin, the world comes to an end for Duncan. his wife Felicity (not their real names), and their beleaguered family. Do they feel betrayed?

“Of course we bloody do,” snaps Felicity. “When the reds seized power in 1994, and it became obvious that the Rich Bastards Board was planning mass closures, nearly 200 people came out on to the streets of Knightsbridge to protest against the destruction of one of this country’s oldest indulgences.”

Duncan takes up the familiar story. “And what did we get? A bloody review, which turns out not to be worth the paper it was written on. Now they’re picking us off one by one, and nobody seems

A failure of demand is why rich bastards are being closed down, says **Mat Coward**

to give a bloody damn.”

A month later, on a gigantic estate in rural Norfolk, closure day has finally, inevitably arrived. Depressed, isolated and dejected, the rich bastards of Duncan Hall, like so many of their colleagues nationwide, have voted to accept the board’s terms.

“What else are we supposed to do?” demands Duncan. “There’s no fight left in us, and the royal family seems incapable of giving any leadership.”

It is hard to imagine a more heart-breaking sight than a rich bastard being decommissioned. In what must seem to onlookers little more than an act of wilful vandalism, rich bastards are closed down in such a way as to make it impossible for them ever to be reopened.

First, they have the tops of their skulls sliced off. But this is not the

swift, surgical procedure it might sound; instead, a rusty old scaffolding pole is swung at their heads by one of their own tenants—in this case a thin, scabby woman, who actually laughs as she takes aim.

Next, on this crisp, but somehow gloomy English winter morning, I watch as a large machine like a bulldozer scoops out the contents of Duncan’s skull. These are taken away by board officials and buried underground. Concrete is poured into the empty brain cavity, and there!—it is over; another rich bastard, left without land, without influence, without purpose.

And for what? Merely to satisfy the whim of a revenge-bent regime, is how it looks from the perspective of this shattered landscape. But did they bring this fate on themselves? Felicity denies the charge: “Never! We only ever did what history and

tradition demanded of us.”

Duncan’s supporters insist that he was, to the end, a vastly profitable rich bastard, producing high-quality nothing, compared to the inferior nothing now being imported, they say, in great quantities and at great cost.

“Gurgle, burgle,” is the only contribution to the debate that Duncan himself can manage, as a vile soup of blood and semi-set concrete drips from his collar. In this state, he’d be lucky even to find work as a Tunbridge Wells solicitor.

Felicity weeps. It is hard to know whether she is weeping for her husband’s broken dignity, for the loss of an entire way of life, or for the cancellation of her store cards. She is clearly distraught, broken.

Will she have to get a job now, I ask. “Probably not,” she concedes, “but I might have to marry a man who has one. That’s what this government has done to us.” For the women of a once-proud and defiant community, that is perhaps the last, terrible humiliation.

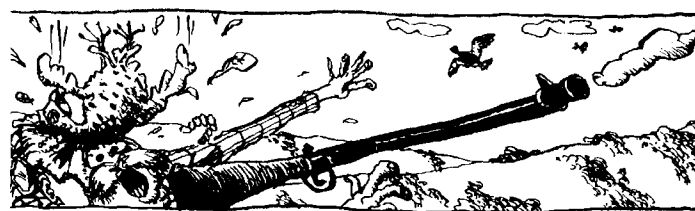
FORTEANA

The fads of Fortean phenomena have their seasons like footwear fashions or typeface fonts. During the seventies, the great cattle mutilation mystery held centre stage in the American ranching states, while in the following decade the public puzzled over the crop circles appearing in the fields of Wessex. Books such as Kagan and Summers’ *Mute Evidence* and Schnabel’s *Round in Circles* gave the impression that all mystery surrounding these phenomena had been dissipated.

While media attention moved on, dedicated anomalists continued to log further unexplained livestock mutilation and patterns of flattened cereal crops worldwide, from Australia to Japan and from Canada to Sweden.

The two mysteries came together in Canada in August last year near the town of Milestone, Saskatchewan. Farmer Joe Rennick noticed a 63-foot-long and 22-foot-wide irregular depression in his field of ripe wheat that “looked like something big had bounced a couple of times across the crop”.

It was a slovenly formation rather than the precise “cookie-cutter” impression of circles noted in Canada and elsewhere in previous seasons. It consisted of three conjoined irregular rectangles, with the grain in each swirled anti-clockwise in foot-wide spirals. Each



The answer to crop circles may turn out to be prickly, reports **Paul Sieveking**

rectangle had an irregular centre of standing wheat.

Rennick noticed that, within the formation, the normally soft prairie “gumbo” soil was rock hard. The undamaged seed heads and stalks had been pressed down, leaving their impression in the hardened soil. On top of the bent-over wheat was a dead, flat porcupine.

“It was flattened to about two inches thick with all four legs sticking out at 45 degrees,” said Rennick. Quills and wheat were intertwined, and scattered around the carcass on the wheat stalks were little balls of clay mixed with broken quills. Near the edge of the formation was a “skid mark” in the soil where a number of quills had been knocked out. They were all oriented in the same direction as the swirled crop.

The North American porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatus*) lives on bark

and leaves, grows to about two feet long. It is a sturdy and often very hefty animal, sometimes weighing as much as 60 pounds. Rennick said there was no blood around the animal or tears to its flesh. Apart from being as flat as a month-old road kill, it seemed to be undamaged. Not suspecting that anyone would be interested in examining it, Rennick phoned the local newspaper, took some photographs and then left it in the field for three weeks where it hardly decomposed in spite of the heat. After that, he threw it away.

Daniel Clairmont of the mutual UFO Network and Chad Deetkin of the Pacific Research Centre in Vancouver arrived too late to examine the carcass, but they concluded from the trace marks that the animal had been dragged—or pushed, or manoeuvred, or perhaps had even dragged itself—about 40 feet

through the mud and wheat from one corner of the formation to where it was found.

Shortly after this, another local farmer came forward with a similar story from 1989. He had found a porcupine in what appeared to be a charred, or perhaps oily, blackened patch of wheat. “I’ve seen decomposing animals before,” said Don Hagel from Estavan, Saskatchewan, “but this wasn’t normal. The skin and quill and bones were all there, but nothing else. No insides. It looked like it had been cooked, sort of from the inside out.”

The carcass appeared unburned, but covered in a charred, black dust. What looked like ashes covered the ground. Hagel called the Mounties, who carried out an autopsy. They couldn’t work out what had happened to the porcupine, although they didn’t think it had been cooked. They suspected some sort of Satanist activity.

Hagel regarded this idea as ridiculous. Even if there were Satanists in Estavan, why would they walk three-quarters of a mile into a wheat field to scorch out the insides of a porcupine?

“You’d think they would sacrifice animals like chickens. They’re easier to catch and they don’t have those quills.”

Paul Sieveking is editor of “Fortean Times”

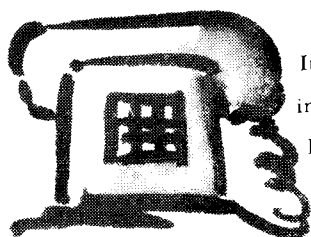
At 9.37am, on Monday the 8th of June (which also happened to be my birthday), my doctor told me I had AIDS. The first person I went to was my brother. I told him I was thinking of killing myself. "Why bother?", he said, "You already have."

That was six years ago.

You see, the problem at that time was that no-one - not the doctors, nor their hospitals, not the media nor their public - really knew enough about HIV infection or AIDS. Or even if

I SURVIVED

there was a difference. The only thing they were certain of was that if you caught it, in no time at all, you were dead.



One year later, I wasn't dead.

It was around this time, that I first came into contact with the London Lighthouse.

I remember the phone call vividly.

"I think I'm dying," I blurted down the receiver. "Don't worry," was the reply,

"That's what I said when I first phoned."

Suddenly, I was back in reality. I wasn't the only person in the world with the virus.

A day later I was one of a dozen 'me's' perched on beanbags, drinking coffee and exorcising demons. I was amongst new friends (well let's face it, most of the old ones scarpered in the time it takes to say Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

The difference with these people was that they were prepared to listen - really listen. With open hearts.

AIDS never hurt me maliciously. People did.

London Lighthouse restored my self-respect. I never thought I was much of an artist, but with a little encouragement from one of the painting therapists, I uncovered a hidden talent. Simple pastimes, like a night at the theatre or a game of monopoly (as long as I'm the 'Top Hat'), are pleasures I'd forgotten how to savour.

My renaissance is complete.

Yes, sometimes I get ill, but the challenge of AIDS has brought out the real person in me. More honest. More positive. More assertive. The Lighthouse worked miracles for me. Now I work for the Lighthouse.

I've got a new career out in the community. Helping men and women affected by HIV and AIDS to face up to it like I did; not as a victim dying but as a person living.

As for the future? Well, I've already paid for next year's holiday. I'm going to Cornwall to celebrate my birthday.

HOW

AIDS.



The London Lighthouse is never short of love and compassion. Money is another matter. Show your compassion. Make a donation.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

POSTCODE _____

I enclose my cheque/PO made payable to
London Lighthouse for £ _____

☐ Please debit my credit card Visa/MasterCard

Account number _____

Expiry date _____

Signature _____

☐ I would like to know more about the work of London Lighthouse. Please send me an information pack.

Please return to: London Lighthouse, 111/117 Lancaster Road, London W11 1QT. Tel: 071-792 1200. Thank you for listening.

London Lighthouse

A centre for people facing the challenge of AIDS

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